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# THE HINDU

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KERALA CABINET RESHUFFLE

**Ministers for Ports, Transport resign**

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PUSH FOR EXPORTS

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***Macroeconomic reasons for India's job crisis***

*A separate policy focus on employment needed*

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16-YEAR-OLD SHUTTLER'S RUN

**Anmol wins women's National crown**

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# J&K Police file murder case over death of three men detained by Army

**Vijaita Singh**
NEW DELHI

Mortal remains of four Army personnel killed in a militant attack being brought to a wreath-laying ceremony in Rajouri on Sunday. PTI

The Jammu and Kashmir Police on Sunday registered a murder case against unidentified persons after three men picked up by the Army for questioning were found dead with multiple injuries on Friday.

Eight men, belonging to the tribal Gujjar Bakkarwal community, were detained following the ambush on an Army convoy on December 21 in the Poonch-Rajouri area, where four soldiers were killed and three others were injured. The terrorists involved in the ambush are yet to be identified or arrested.

The first information report has been filed at the Surankote police station in Poonch under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), a government source said. The case was registered after a high-level intervention from Delhi following the release of a 29-second video, which went viral on social media, showing some persons, believed to be Army jawans, stripping the three men and sprinkling chilli powder on them. The video is said to have been shot at an Army camp.

Meanwhile, four days after the ambush at Dera ki Gali in Thanamandi area, the Army on Sunday released the names of the four soldiers killed in the terrorist attack.

They are Naik Birender Singh from Chamoli, Uttarakhand; rifleman Gautam Kumar from Pauri Gharwal, Uttarakhand; Naik Karan Kumar from Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh; and rifleman Chandan Kumar from Nawada, Bihar.

The wreath-laying ceremony was held in Rajouri on Sunday.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

# Tanker with Indian crew hit by drone in Red Sea

Crew safe and the vessel is heading towards India; U.S. Central Command says it received reports from two ships that they were under attack; *USS Laboon* responded to the distress calls

**Dinakar Peri**
NEW DELHI

A Gabon-flagged crude oil tanker, *m.v Sai Baba*, heading to India was hit by a one-way attack drone in the southern Red Sea, the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Sunday. The vessel had an all-Indian crew and is managed by an Indian company. No injuries were reported.

"At approximately 8 p.m. (Sanaa time), U.S. Naval Forces Central Command received reports from two ships in the Southern Red Sea that they were under attack," CENTCOM said on X (formerly Twitter). *USS Laboon* responded to the distress calls, it said.

The vessel had received a certification from the Indian register of shipping, defence sources said. "All crew are safe and the vessel is heading towards India," a source said.

*m.v. Chem Pluto*, which was hit by a suspected drone just outside the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) on Saturday, was being escorted by Indian Coast Guard ship *Vikram* on Sunday, and is scheduled to reach Mumbai on Monday. A Pentagon spokesperson told the Reuters news agency that *Chem Pluto* was hit by "a one-way attack drone fired from Iran".

The twin attacks on Sunday took the number of attacks on commercial shipping by Houthi militants since October 17 to 15. After *Sai Baba* came under attack, *m.v. BLAAMANEN*, a Norwegian-flagged and operated chemical/oil tanker, reported a near-miss by a Houthi one-way attack drone with no injuries or damage reported.

**To the rescue:** *ICGS Vikram* escorting *m.v. Chem Pluto* to Mumbai on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

CONTINUED ON
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## NEARBY

### Mahasabha's fiat to Veerashaivas

BELAGAVI
Demanding a fresh caste census based on scientific mode, the Veerashaiva Mahasabha has urged the community members not to describe themselves as Hindus in the forthcoming population census or caste census.

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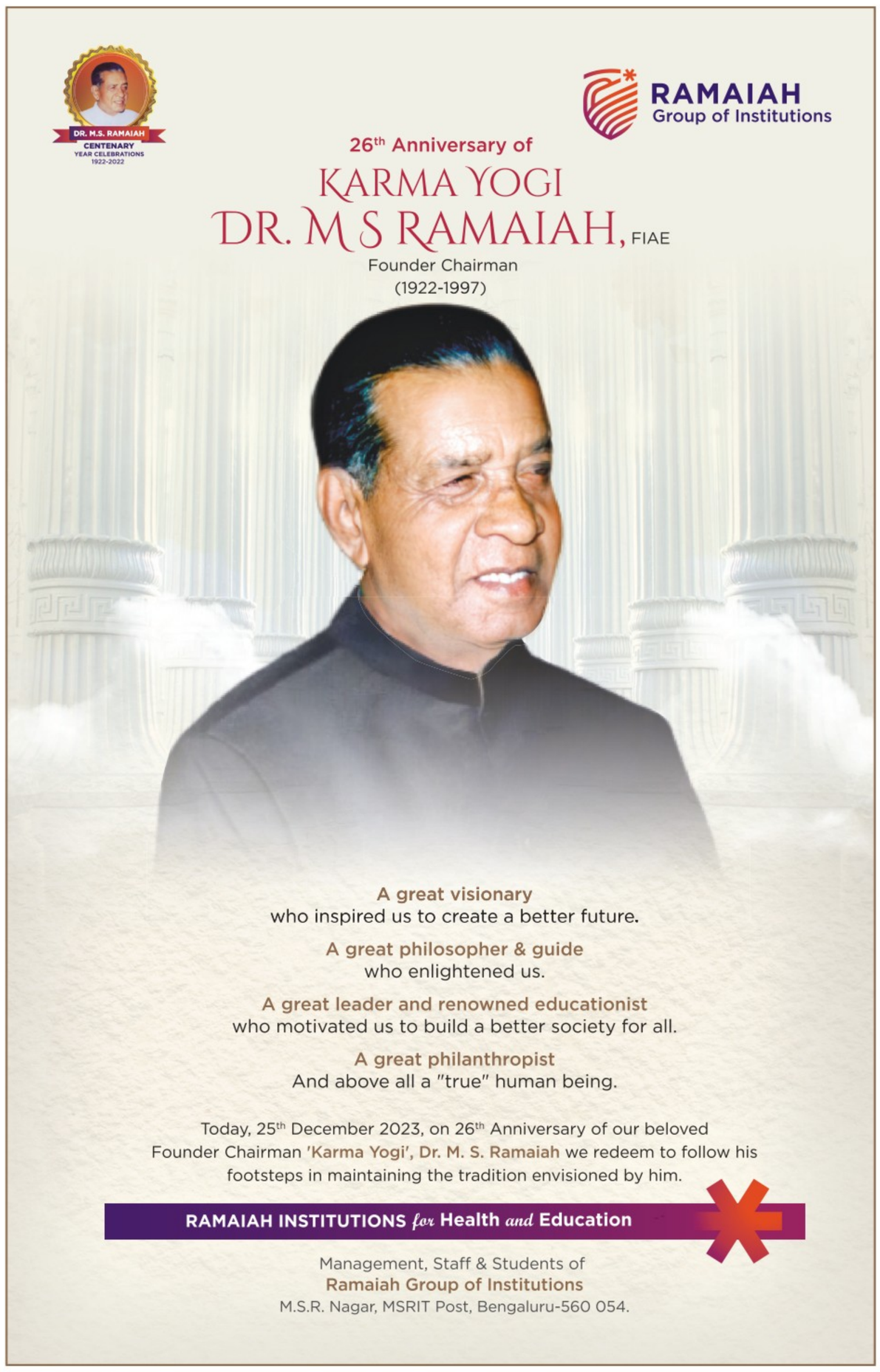
EDUCATIONPLUS » PAGE 7



# Sudhakar dives into the hearts of the masses in his debut PKL season

The sprightly raider from Tiruchi has the makings of becoming kabaddi's next big thing from Tamil Nadu

Lavanya Lakshmi Narayanan
CHENNAI

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Google Palayanallur. This village near Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu will throw up a number of results – location, temples, pincode and district info. And then a video of the man who has put this village on the national kabaddi mat – M. Sudhakar.

The 21-year-old is a sprightly raider who has made his way through the Yuva Kabaddi Series, a youth league that attracts fresh blood seeking to leave their mark on the kabaddi mat and one that also looks to be feeder to the bigger and more popular Pro Kabaddi League. Sudhakar, who represents Patna Pirates, is quick down the flanks and supremely agile with his *dubkis* (dives from under the defensive chain). He has the skill and the energy to use it productively once he steps on the rubber.

A part of a multi-pronged raiding unit in the Pirates set-up, Sudhakar has already scored 39 points in five matches, including two Super 10s.

**Takes a village to make a hero**

Sudhakar belongs to a passionate kabaddi lineage. His father and three elder brothers are all kabaddi players who live and breathe the sport. However, Sudhakar is the only one who has made it to the peak of professional kabaddi.

The young Tamil Nadu player's nascent career is an example of how support can help a person soar.

"When my brothers went to play tournaments, I would also have the itch to play," Sudhakar told *The Hindu*. "When I got picked for my school and college teams, I would be used in the last two to three minutes to raid strategically." Sudhakar still plays for Palayanallur Kabaddi Club, which continues to back the raider.

"I then joined Jamal Mohamed College. Eventually, I played in the junior Nationals and we got a medal there. That paved the way for me to join the Integral Coach Factory (ICF)," Sudhakar recalled.

**Well-wisher's push**

"I didn't know about the ICF or the opportunity. The person I have to thank is a well-wisher called Pasupathy. He is someone I had never seen before. He saw my performances and reached out to me with a job offer at the ICF. He mentored me like I was his younger brother and the steady employment and stability in my life is all because of him," he added.

Sudhakar's interest in the sport bloomed at the cost of his academics, but he wasn't worried about it.

"I never wanted to take a break from kabaddi because I knew I was not academically gifted and it might not open career avenues for me. My livelihood and sustenance depended on it as I knew that this sport might help me get a job or find my way to platforms like Pro Kabaddi," he explained.

Sudhakar's life is tuned to the clock of the sport.

"Beyond 5.30 in the morning, I usually can't sleep. I head to the ground by 6.30 and I am usually the first man on the ground. The others turn up around 8. So I work on my jumps with the tyres, I run and I also prepare the mud for us to play on," he said, narrating his routine back home. Younger children who train at the club would spend some time taking tips from Sudhakar after which it would be time for him to train with the seniors.

Sudhakar missed the trials for the Yuva Kabaddi Series as he was participating in an inter-collegiate match. However, luck favoured the player as Samiyappan, coach of Palani Tuskers and coach of the TN junior side, backed Sudhakar and chose him anyway.

**Scary start**

"The experience of my first professional kabaddi match during the Yuva Kabaddi Series was a little scary. The lights, just how bright the arena was, the audience, everything was so intimidating. I hesitated a little bit but I got a Super 10 in my first game. That eventually helped me ease into what life in Pro Kabaddi would be like," Sudhakar remembered.

Even in the league, Sudhakar comes into an ecosystem that is largely hindi speaking, something he considered as an element that held him back a bit. However, he had a familiar face in ICF teammate Sajin Chandrasekar who helped bridge the gap.

**Raiding for respect**

When the PKL caravan moved to Chennai, sitting in the audience to watch the Pirates in action were Sudhakar's parents, Maruthamuthu and Kannagi.

"Sudhakar's father, two elder brothers and cousin brothers have that flavour of kabaddi in them and train everyday in our village. It's life. Tiruchi usually has a kabaddi tournament as part of the jallikattu festival," Kannagi reminisced.

Unlike the men of the household, the women did not play the sport and Kannagi was not always a comfortable spectator because her son was injury-prone early on.

"At the start, I used to get injured frequently and my father being a kabaddi player knows how often a player gets injured. My mother once cried seeing me get injured during a local match. So for a while, my parents hesitated to let me take part in local tournaments but my brothers started accompanying me wherever I went and that helped them feel reassured," he recollected.

For Sudhakar, the hunger to succeed in the sport stemmed from an intensely personal motive too. "My father is a daily-wage worker and wasn't very respected in our village. But now that I have managed to get here to Pro Kabaddi and thanks to playing the sport, our village folk now recognise him as kabaddi Sudhakar's father and that always brings him to tears. He speaks often about how proud that makes him," Sudhakar revealed.

As the season unfolds, besides giving his parents a reason to smile, Sudhakar is keen to repay the faith his coach Narender Redu has shown in him. "When teams acquire new players, they don't always trust them with opportunities in the playing 7 right away and back them the way I have been. I hope I finish with 300 points in the season and help the team in the best way I can," he signed off.

**THE GIST**

- Sudhakar's favourite raider is the league's all-time top player Pardeep Narwal. His *dubki* is modelled after Narwal's mastery over the move.
- The one defender Sudhakar loves to watch is Iranian veteran Fazel Atrachali. Patna Pirates beat Atrachali's Gujarat Giants 33-30 earlier this month and Sudhakar top scored with six points

# Surender Gill — Yoddhas' one-man army is always up for the challenge

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Lavanya Lakshmi Narayanan
CHENNAI

If one is watching UP Yoddhas' raider Surender Gill play for the first time, it is hard to miss how he always has creases on his forehead, how he's listening to his coach's instructions, how his attention is on the big screen with the scores. There's a sense of angst to watch him bear the weight of his team (more often than not) on the mat.

**All about confidence**

This is by no means an exaggeration. With or without the support of superstar raider Pardeep Narwal, Gill has found himself as the lead raider of a struggling Yoddhas outfit right from last season.

He accumulated 140 raid points in 14 matches in an edition that also saw him struggle with injuries. This time, he finds himself among the best raiders of the tournament, with 75 points in seven games, including four Super 10s.

"A good start is very important for anyone in kabaddi. It boosts your confidence to keep up with the competition. Confidence can sometimes make up for deficits in skill," Gill told *The Hindu*.

"We always work in pairs, the raiding is never focused on one man," he explained, a little embarrassed when discussing his success.

"If the left cover is weak, Pardeep goes. If the right cover is weak, I go. It's a partnership," he said. Surender doubles up in defence, having started his kabaddi journey as a defender in circle kabaddi in Rohtak, Haryana.

**Sports and stability**

Gill was balancing a media course alongside his preparations for the league the last time around.

He was a science student in school, but realised very early on that an academic life was not for him.

"*Masti ke liye khelte the kabaddi* (we played the sport for fun). After a while, it became something we could build a career on," he added.

It is hard to constantly work one's body as an athlete, and Surender is aware of the need for a sense of balance. There's a generous dose of PUBG peppered into his routine.

**Balance is key**

"I am not a serious person at all," he said. " Life is not kabaddi kabaddi kabaddi 24x7. I am able to compartmentalise it properly.

"The chat about the game has its place but balance is important and it's something I've done all my life," he added.

Yoddhas have consistently made the knockouts but if they hope to go a step further and win the title, this outfit might be looking past its talisman (Narwal) and pinning its hopes on the towering 25-year-old Surender who will be happy to deliver.

# Kannada to be 1st or 2nd language, not 3rd, for class VIII from 2024-25

KTBS has decided not to print third language Kannada textbooks as all schools, including those affiliated to CBSE and ICSE, have to teach Kannada as the first or second language from next year

**Jayanth R.**
BENGALURU

Following the implementation of the Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015, the Karnataka government has decided not to print third language Kannada textbooks for class VIII from the academic year 2024-25.

From the next academic year, NCERT curriculum schools, including those affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE), will have to teach Kannada as the first or second language.

The Karnataka Textbook Society (KTBS) has invited indents from schools to supply textbooks for the 2024-25 academic year and said that, as part of the implementation of the Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015, the third language Kannada textbooks for class VIII will not be in force from 2024-25.

Hence, schools have been advised not to indent the third language Kannada textbooks for class VIII.

Suma B.K., Senior Assistant Director of KTBS, told *The Hindu*, "The three-language formula is in force in Karnataka. Kannada is being taught in schools as the first, second, or third language.

"Since 2017, the Kannada Language Learning Act, 2015, has been in force in Karnataka, according to which it is mandatory to teach Kannada as the first or second language in all schools in the State. Therefore, since 2017, the teaching of Kannada as a third language has been phased out. In the year 2023-24, the teaching of the third language, Kannada, in class VII was stopped, and textbooks were not even printed. Teaching of a third language for class VIII students is being stopped for 2024-25, so textbooks will not be printed. In the next two years, the teaching of Kannada as a third language will be stopped for classes IX and X. This is the decision of the Department of School Education and Literacy (DSEL). According to their order, action has been taken to print the textbooks," she said.

A file photo of school textbooks. The Karnataka Textbook Society has invited indents from schools to supply textbooks for the 2024-25 academic year.

### Decision opposed

The government's decision is being opposed by private school managements and a section of parents.

In the wake of strong opposition from private schools to teach Kannada as the first or second language, the State government enacted the Karnataka Educational Institutions (Issue of No Objection Certificate and Control) Rules 2022. According to these rules, the government has made a provision to teach Kannada as a second or third language, which is being followed by most of the private schools managements.

In addition, around 20 parents moved the High Court questioning making Kannada a compulsory language from class I to X even in the CBSE and the CISCE schools on August 2, 2023, and the case is pending. In such a situation, the government's decision not to print third language Kannada textbooks has created confusion among school managements.

### 'Arbitrary orders'

"Without withdrawing the 2022 rules, deciding to stop the printing of third language Kannada textbooks is like the government defying its own order.

The authorities are issuing arbitrary orders. The department should not take away the right of private schools teaching Kannada as a third language without any official order from the government," said Shashikumar D., General Secretary of Associated Managements of Schools in Karnataka (KAMS).

"None of the parents are against teaching Kannada as a first, second, or third language. But the government has allowed us to teach Kannada as a second or third language, which we are complying with. Many children from other States join class VIII in Karnataka. If Kannada is suddenly imposed as a first or second language on these children, it will cause severe problems.

The government should call a meeting of private school managements and parents' associations, and take an appropriate decision in this regard," said Mansoor Ali Khan, chairman of Delhi Public School.

B.B. Cauvery, Commissioner of School Education, said, "The school textbooks will be printed and distributed as per the order issued by the KTBS. We have already submitted a proposal to the State Government to amend the Karnataka Educational Institutions (Issue of No Objection Certificate and Control) Rules 2022."

**Around 20 parents moved the High Court questioning making Kannada a compulsory language from class I to X even in the CBSE and the CISCE schools on August 2, 2023**

## *Shining bright*

Devotees gather for prayers on the eve of Christmas at St. Mary's Basilica church in Shivajinagar in Bengaluru on Sunday. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

# Traffic gridlock, increased ticket fares dampen festive spirits

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

The allure of the long weekend and the ongoing Christmas-New Year festive season is turning into a disappointment for Bengalureans with massive traffic jams on all roads leading out of the city and increased transport fares in private buses and flights. The Road Transport Corporations had deployed an additional 6,000 buses in Bengaluru for the long weekend.

On Sunday morning, the road leading up to the toll plaza on the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway saw long lines of bumper-to-bumper traffic as thousands of people were travelling towards Mysuru, and also, especially Coorg. Many commuters said they were stuck on the expressway for almost an hour. The traffic snarls on Mysuru Road began Friday night itself and continued even on Saturday.

Slow-moving traffic at Kengeri NICE road junction on the Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway on Saturday . K. MURALI KUMAR

A similar situation was seen on roads leading to Tamil Nadu on Saturday, with traffic intensifying by the night.

"As I approached Electronics City, the traffic worsened, and it continued throughout the highway leading up to Chennai. It usually takes around six hours to go from Bengaluru to Chennai, but due to this festive rush, the journey took 10 hours," said Monica P., an IT employee from the city.

The Bengaluru Traffic Police officials said while no congestion was reported on any corridors, the number of vehicles was significantly higher during the weekend.

"As we have moved many bus stops - like Madivala bus stop to Bommanahalli, the T.C. Palya bus stop and Hebbal bus stop a little ahead of its usual points - there was no congestion anywhere," said M.N. Anucheth, Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic), Bengaluru.

He added, "However, on Friday there were too many outgoing buses, and on Saturday night, there were too many private vehicles going out of the city. The volume was up by 22% on Saturday night."

### Ticket fares up

The season also saw flight and private bus fares going up by 20 - 30% from Bengaluru to destinations like Chennai, Hyderabad, Kochi, and Mumbai. The surge pricing is expected to reduce only after the first week of January.

"Due to a sudden programme, I had to book tickets to Mumbai for my family for December 27. The trains were all full, and bus tickets were almost as expensive as flight tickets. With no choice, I booked flight tickets for ₹6,000 whereas it would have only cost around ₹3,500-4,000 if not for this holiday season," said Sudhakar Rao, a retired bank employee from Dodda Bommasandra," he added.

# FIR against Puneeth Kerehalli

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

Kodigehalli police filed an FIR against Hindutva activist Puneeth Kerehalli on Saturday after he allegedly objected to Christmas decoration at Mall of Asia and picked up a fight with security agent of mall at Byatarayanapura.

According to the police, Puneeth, who entered the mall along with four others. He asked the security why the mall was decorated with a Christmas tree and charged ₹200 entry fee despite the mall being located in a Hindu nation. The security manager responded saying since this is a Christmas season and the management decided to decorate the mall for the festival.

Kerehalli, later picked up a fight and told the security to decorate the mall on the inaugural day of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. The accused also raised Jai Shri Ram slogans and created a ruckus at the mall.

# Rowdy sheeter hacked to death by gang

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

A rowdy sheeter was hacked to death by a gang of assailants in Lakkasandra on Sunday afternoon. The incident has created fear among the public as the rowdy sheeter was chased by a gang of assailants armed with lethal weapons from a temple for several kilometres in full public glare during daytime and was hacked to death in a hotel in front of other customers. Tension gripped the area after the murder, and the city police deployed a platoon of Karnataka State Reserve Police to prevent any further violence and to assure the public.

The deceased Jayaprakash was participating in a public feast at the temple on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti on Sunday when the gang of assailants attacked him, and he tried to flee. After a filmy chase, he was hacked to death when he barged into a hotel to save himself.

# Another year of man-animal conflict

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

Like the previous year, 2023 also witnessed instances of man-animal conflict in and around Bengaluru. However, this year saw casualties among humans and animals. The one among them which garnered attention was the death of a leopard on November 1.

The feline said to be aged about 12 years old, which was seen wandering in AECS Layout and Kudlu Gate near the Singasandra area for over three days, succumbed to a gunshot by Forest Department personnel when they were trying to capture it.

Forest Department personnel said the leopard was shot at only after it attacked its four people during the combing operation to capture it.

Forest Department personnel setting up a cage at Kudlu Gate, Singasandra, for catching a leopard, off Hosur Road in Bengaluru on October 30.

The movement of this leopard on streets of the residential area during night time and also in the basement of an apartment, which was captured on CCTV cameras, had caused a lot of anxiety among residents of the locality. A couple more instances of leopard spotting were reported in Chikkathogur off NICE Road and Soladevanahalli.

Following repeated instances of the leopard sighting in the city's residential areas, the government decided to set up a dedicated rapid response Leopard Task Force for Bengaluru.

Environment and Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre said due to the lack of rain, wild animals were coming from the forest areas in search of food. He had also instructed the Department to capture wild animals that stray into Bengaluru and release them into the forests or send them to rehabilitation centres.

According to wildlife conservationist Sanjay Gubbi, there are about 30-35 leopards on the outskirts of Bengaluru and about 40 in the Bannerghatta National Park.

### Jumbo menace

While instances of elephant attacks on humans in Hassan, Kodagu, and Chikkamagaluru are not uncommon, during the year, there were also occurrences of human deaths due to elephant attacks in the outskirts of Bengaluru. In May, a 48-year-old tribal woman belonging to the Hakki Pikki community who was herding cattle in BNP limits at Anekal was trampled to death by a wild elephant. Veerabhadra, a farmer in Ramanagara district, was trampled to death by a wild elephant. In another case, Ravi, a farmer, had been trampled by an elephant near the BNP. On December 17, another farmer was trampled to death by a wild elephant in Kanakapura.

### Land encroachment

The loss of green cover around Bengaluru has been blamed as the reason for the man-animal conflict cases in the city.

According to Mr. Khandre, Bengaluru Urban had over 8,900 hectares of forest land, but about 2,800 acres of forest area around Bengaluru had been encroached upon.

REWIND 2023

**Timings**
**BENGALURU**

| | |
|---|---|
| **MONDAY, DEC. 25** | |
| RISE 06:38 | SET 18:01 |
| RISE 16:30 | SET 04:55 |
| **TUESDAY, DEC. 26** | |
| RISE 06:39 | SET 18:01 |
| RISE 17:25 | SET 05:54 |
| **WEDNESDAY, DEC. 27** | |
| RISE 06:39 | SET 18:02 |
| RISE 18:21 | SET 06:50 |

| Bengaluru Weather | max | min |
|---|---|---|
| Tumakuru | 30 | 23 |
| Mysuru | 30 | 24 |
| Bengaluru | 29 | 18 |

**Bengaluru Today**
**27°C** The weather will be dry. Morning will cool. Day will be comfortable but humid.. Night will be slight cool.

**Bengaluru Tomorrow**
**27°C** A slight cool morning with mist and haze will turns into a comfortable day. Spell of light rain and thundershower to occur. Night will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY G2C
E-Tender Notice No. 42/2023 Dated:19-12-2023
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tender for the following works:

| Sl. 1 | Description in Brief |
|---|---|
| | Set of KBIL make WSP items (Qty. 74 No's.) (Tender No. L8236918) |
| Sl. 2 | Non contact laser based wheel profile measurement and wheel diameter measurement system. (Qty. 02 No's) (Tender No. L8236924) |

Last date for submission of bids for: Upto 10:30 Hrs. on 12-01-2024
For details log on:www.ireps.gov.in
Senior Divisional Materials Manager
PUB/579/AAD/PRB/SWR/2023-24 Bengaluru
South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRRLY

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY G2C
Publication of Corrigendum-2 to E-Tender Notice No. CAO/CN/BNC/EPC/69/2023 Dated: 05-09-2023

| Item of work | Approx. Value |
|---|---|
| Construction of New Broad Gauge Line Track Between Jamkhandi Road (Incl.) and Jagadal (Incl.) for a length of 20.585 km Under Bagalkot-Kudachi New Line Project (142 Km) including Signal & Telecommunication & Electrical Works. (Tender Ref. No: JAMKHANDI ROAD-JAGADAL-EPC) | Rs. 4,22,46,37,345/- |

| Date of Closing | |
|---|---|
| Existing | Revised |
| 04-01-2024 (11:00 Hrs.) | 03-02-2024 (11:00 Hrs.) |

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in
Deputy Chief Engineer/Construction/Works Bengaluru Cantonment
PUB/582/AAD/PRB/SWR/2023-24
South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRRLY

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
Chennai Division (Mechanical Branch)
E-TENDER NOTICE No: M_M_319_AMC_140T Gottwald BD Crane2, Dated: 22.12.2023
Divisional Railway Manager / Mechanical Branch / Chennai Division, Chennai - 600 003 for and on behalf of the President of India invites ONLINE tenders for the following work as per tender notice given in the e-tender Portal www.ireps.gov.in. The tenderer(s) / contractor(s) intending to apply for e-tender for Mechanical works in Chennai Division, need to get enrolled in the e-tender portal www.ireps.gov.in and only online tenders will be accepted.
Description: AMC for 140T BD crane (Gottwald Crane New Design, Crane No.144006) of 140T BD crane shed / TNPM for all components of Hydraulic, Pneumatic and Mechanical, Auxiliary Engine (Excluding Main Engine and safe load indicator) for a period of 03 Years; Location: Tondiarpet Wagon depot; Advertised Tender Value in : ₹ 17,78,212.80; Earnest Money Deposit : ₹ 35,600/-; Similar nature of work: Not Applicable; Period of completion in months: 36 Months;
Tender closing date and time: 12.01.2024 @ 12.00 hrs. Details of value of tender, EMD are given in e-portal www.ireps.gov.in For details bid submission please refer to web portal www.ireps.gov.in
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SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY G2C
The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following works:
E-Tender Notice No. B/TRD.2023-24/12 Dated: 18-12-2023

| Name of work | Approx. Value |
|---|---|
| [i] Rewiring of Phooltas make 4-wheeler (Mark-IV) tower wagon No. PTL2011070061, PTL2011070060 and PTL2013020134 [ii] Overhauling of lifting Platform of TW865 BEML 8 WHEELER [iii] Replacement of battery of Tower Wagon PTL2013020134. | Rs. 39,67,174.43 |

E-Tender Notice No. B/TRD.2023-24/14 Dated: 18-12-2023

| Name of work | Approx. Value |
|---|---|
| [i] Conversion of OHE from tramway to conventional in WHPC-SGWF-WFD Rd 5, replacement of Isolators and Shifting of mast in WFD depot Jurisdiction [ii] Provision of sacrificial mast and bifurcation of Roads at SGT yard [iii] Electrification of Rd-10 and top wiring arrangements for Rd-11 and Rd-12 at SGT yard. | Rs. 2,61,49,027.74 |

E-Tender Notice No. B/TRD.2023-24/15 Dated: 18-12-2023

| Name of work | Approx. Value |
|---|---|
| [i] Modification of OHE due to shifting of IOL's infront of stop signals in Bengaluru - Jolarpettai section [ii] Conversion of OHE from tramway to conventional at Bangarapet Rd 6, provision of isolator, SI, structure bonds, buried Rails in SP-SSP's, Droppers, Earth pits and Retreving of masts etc., in the jurisdiction of Bangarapet & Kuppam [iii] Upgradation/ Improvement of TRD assets in Bengaluru Division on age cum condition basis. | Rs. 2,30,22,178.79 |

E-Tender Notice No. B/TRD.2023-24/16 Dated: 16-12-2023

| Name of work | Approx. Value |
|---|---|
| Improvement to power factor at TPP/TSS. | Rs. 78,50,316.01 |

Last date for submission of bids for above Tenders: Upto 15:00 Hrs. on 09-01-2024
For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in
Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer Traction Distribution, Bengaluru
PUB/576/AAD/PRB/SWR/2023-24
South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRRLY

# The cosmological constant problem is one of physics' biggest crises

The dark energy content of the universe, based on theory, is wildly off the mark. In the simplest estimate, there should be enough energy in a cube with sides of length $10^{-21}$ cm to unbind the entire Milky Way, yet in reality there appears to be much, much less. Nobody knows a convincing way to get around this

Nirmal Raj

Supernova remnant SNR 0454-67.2 is likely the result of a Type Ia supernova explosion. In the late 1990s, scientists studied the light from such supernovae to find that the universe's expansion is accelerating. ESA/HUBBLE, NASA

## THE GIST

Space as Einstein taught us is not a state of "nothingness". It is a bendable, stretchable medium that we occupy, much like water is for fish. Add energy uniformly across a patch of space and that patch will expand

Dark energy dictates the rate at which space expands. From this we can estimate how much dark energy is present in any volume of space, by considering the size and age of the universe. The universe is wider than billions of lightyears and older than 10 billion years, so the dark energy is actually as dilute as one sugar crystal in a *cubic kilometre*

The cosmological constant is fine-tuned over a breathtaking 122 decimal places. That really is the heart of the problem

Can you get rid of all the energy in the room in which you are reading this? Move the room far from the earth's gravity, then toss out everything made of matter so you can cross off mass, kinetic, and potential energies. Also pump out the air, the cosmic rays constantly streaming in, and the fog of neutrinos that were made during the Big Bang. Next, kill the energy in photons: darken the room completely, and clear away the microwave radiation left over from the infant universe.

Now all that's left in your room is empty space, and no energy – right? No! Your room still has "dark energy". In a patch of space the size of your room, dark energy is so scant that it is nearly impossible to detect. But across the cosmos, which is full of space, it contributes a titanic 70% of all energy. Matter, in the form of stars, gas, and the mysterious dark matter, supplies most of the other 30%, while radiation in the form of photons and neutrinos chips in 0.01%.

### The hand of dark energy

The basic truth about space that Albert Einstein taught us is that it is not a state of 'nothingness'. Instead, it is a bendable, stretchable medium that we occupy, much like water is for fish. Add energy uniformly across a patch of space and that patch will expand (or shrink, if the energy is negative). Each form of energy tells the universe how to expand in its own way. This is much like how you can inflate a balloon with air, water or sand, and in each case it will have a characteristic look and feel.

Since dark energy dominates the energy budget of the universe, it also dictates the rate at which space expands. We can reverse-engineer this fact to estimate how much dark energy is present in any volume of space, by considering the size and age of the universe. Add too much positive energy and the cosmos would expand too fast: galaxies would fly away from us faster than light, so that only the regions of the universe nearest to us will be visible. Effectively, this "observable universe" would appear to shrink. Add too much negative energy and the universe would actually shrink to a tiny point. The greater this negative energy, the sooner this event.

Everyone can agree that the universe is larger than India and older than the Indus Valley Civilisation. These facts alone restrict the density of dark energy to the caloric content of a pinch of sugar in a cubic metre. In reality, the universe is wider than billions of lightyears and older than 10 billion years, so the dark energy is actually as dilute as one sugar crystal in a cubic kilometre.

### The problem arises

And here is the crisis: the calculated dark energy content of the universe, based on theory – a bread-and-butter particle physics calculation – is bizarrely off the mark. In the simplest estimate, there should be enough energy in a cube with sides of length $10^{-21}$ cm to unbind the entire Milky Way, yet in reality there appears to be much, much less. Nobody knows a convincing way to get around this. This is to say that while the universe is observed to be incredibly big, physicists calculate that it must be tinier than a proton. This, in a nutshell, is the cosmological constant problem, and it has come to be called rightly as "the worst theoretical prediction in the history of physics".

How is the amount of dark energy predicted from just theory? To begin with, particle theorists have a pretty sharp notion of what dark energy is composed of. (This situation is different from that of dark matter, whose identity is a total mystery.) There are three unavoidable quantities that behave exactly like dark energy.

**1. The weight of the vacuum** – Einstein realised that space supplied its own energy and that it was spread uniformly, i.e. an energy that was a "cosmological constant". Back then, physicists believed that the universe, instead of expanding, stayed still. So in his equations, Einstein cancelled the cosmological constant against the energy of matter. But when he soon learnt from astronomer Edwin Hubble that the universe is actually expanding, he rued the missed opportunity to forecast this observation, calling it his "biggest blunder".

> In a patch of space the size of your room, dark energy is so scant that it is nearly impossible to detect. But across the cosmos, which is full of space, it contributes a titanic 70% of all energy

**2. Zero-point energy** – Thanks to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics, any physical system has a minimum positive energy. This is also true of quantum fields that source elementary particles such as electrons and photons (like sugarcane sources sugar cubes).

These fields fill space, thus furnishing energy at every point in the universe.

**3. Field potentials** – All fields have kinetic energy, but certain fields that carry no quantum spin, such as the Higgs field (which sources the Higgs boson), also have potential energies. They also contribute energy to every point in the universe.

### The fine-tuning

Contributions 2 and 3 are calculable in theory, and end up supplying an enormous amount of energy that should make the universe smaller than the proton. But contribution 1 is unknown. Imagine trying to buy a ship of unknown cost using all your stocks and real estate, and getting a paisa back as balance. Wouldn't you suspect the seller of tuning the price over seven decimal places?

The cosmological constant appears to be fine-tuned over a breathtaking 122 decimal places. That really is the heart of the problem: what is the mathematical principle that can explain away this apparent fine-tuning? The possible answers – posited by Stephen Hawking and Steven Weinberg, among others – are equally dizzying, but that is for another day.

*(Nirmal Raj is an assistant professor of theoretical physics at the Centre for High Energy Physics in the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, and tweets at @PhysicsNirmal.)*

## BIG SHOT

An elephant drinks from a swimming pool at a tented camp on the boundaries of Hwange National Park in northern Zimbabwe on December 15. The 14,600-sq.-km park is home to more than 450,000 savanna elephants. Now, blackened corpses, many of infant elephants, scar this landscape where the rains have been more than six weeks late and temperatures have regularly hit 40 degrees C. AFP

## WHAT IS IT?

# Nematocyst: a cellular weapon

Arkatapa Basu

A jellyfish uses the nematocyst to painful and sometimes deadly effect. KARAN KARNIK/UNSPLASH

Evolution has come up with many strange ways to help animals defend themselves. One is a specialised cell called a nematocyst. Nematocysts are found in some animals, but especially jellyfish, corals, sea anemones, and hydras, that serve as potent weapons to hunt prey and fend off predators. Each nematocyst consists of a capsule containing a coiled, thread-like tubule and a bulbous structure with toxins. When stressed, the nematocyst rapidly ejects the tubule, often with an acceleration surpassing that of a bullet. Indeed, this mechanism is one of the fastest processes in the animal kingdom.

Nematocysts play a crucial role in the feeding and defence strategies of cnidarians in particular. Cnidarians are animals that contain cells called cnidocytes. When potential prey comes into contact with a cnidocyte, specialised sensory structures on the cell's surface trigger the release of the nematocyst. The tubule then unfurls, piercing the prey's outer layer or injecting toxins into its body.

The toxins in nematocysts also have different effects. Some are paralytic, immobilising the prey; others are cytolytic, meaning they break down cells. Cnidarians have been known to use a combination of toxins to ensure the success of its predatory or defensive efforts.

Overall, the complexity of nematocysts contributes to the success of cnidarians in various aquatic environments, making them formidable creatures.

**For feedback and suggestions**
for 'Science', please write to
**science@thehindu.co.in**
with the subject 'Daily page'

# Marginal rise in COVID-19 cases in State

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

The State on Sunday reported 106 COVID-19 positive cases in the last 24 hours, marginally up from 104 on Saturday. With this, the total number of active COVID-19 cases in the State has risen to 344.

However, the test positivity rate, which was 5.93% on Saturday, shot up to 7.35% on Sunday.

# 'Comply with Kannada signboard rules by Feb. 28'

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

Shops, commercial establishments, and government offices coming under the civic body's limits must comply with Kannada signboard rules before February 28, said Chief Civic Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath.

Mr. Giri Nath said the signboard should have at least 60% of Kannada on them, and the same should be implemented. The action comes after the State government issued a circular on the same. Not just in the city, the rule is applicable across the State and the corporations should ensure implementation of the same, the State government circular said.

Mr. Giri Nath said in Bengaluru, there is a total of 1,400 km of arterial and sub-arterial roads where there are many shops, commercial complexes and other business establishments. The BBMP will now carry out a survey to find out how many have not installed Kannada nameplates.

He further said the people are given time to implement the rule till February 28 and if anyone is found not adhering to the guidelines after the deadline, s/he will be penalised.

# SRS leaders barred from Chikkamagaluru

**The Hindu Bureau**
SHIVAMOGGA

Chikkamagaluru Deputy Commissioner Meena Nagaraj has issued an order prohibiting the entry of Sri Rama Sene (SRS) national president Pramod Mutalik and State president Gangadhar Mahadev Rao Kulkarni into Chikkamagaluru district until January 5, 2024.

The Deputy Commissioner issued the prohibitory order as per Section 144 of the CrPC. The decision was taken in view of the three-day Datta Jayanti celebrations that began on Sunday.

Chikkamagaluru Superintendent of Police Vikram Amathe had sought the prohibition of their entry into the district on the grounds that they might make inflammatory speeches during Datta Jayanti, leading to a law and order problem in the district. There have been many cases against Pramod Mutalik and Gangadhar Mahadev on charges of making inflammatory speeches. During the Datta Mala Abhiyana conducted by Sri Rama Sene between October 30 and November 5, earlier this year, Gangadhar Mahadev Rao made a speech that Shakhadri and his family would not be allowed to hold urs at Sri Guru Dattatreya Bababudan Swami Dargah. He also released a video clip stating that his organisation would hold Datta Jayanti at Bababudan Swamy Dargah in Nagenahalli. Citing these speeches, the Superintendent of Police requested the Deputy Commissioner issue an order restricting their entry into the district.

Chikkamagaluru Deputy Commissioner Meena Nagaraj has clamped prohibitory orders in 200 metres of area around the place at survey number 57 of Nagenahalli of Jagara Hobli in Chikkamagaluru taluk from Sunday to December 27.


## Notice Inviting Tender

Reliance Industries Limited (**"RIL"**) and BP Exploration (Alpha) Limited (**"bp"**), (RIL and bp shall also be collectively referred to as the "Sellers", and individually the "Seller") have entered into a Production Sharing Contract for the Block KG-DWN-98/3 (KG-D6) dated 12 April 2000 with the Government of India. The Sellers intend to sell Crude Oil produced from the Block (KG-D6 Crude Oil).

On behalf of the Sellers, RIL invites bids from eligible bidders having the necessary capability and requisite statutory and regulatory clearances, for purchase at Sellers' option of approximately 19,000 Barrels (@ 3,000 KL) of Crude Oil per month.

Subject to the terms of the Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) and Crude Oil Sale Agreement (COSA), the Crude Oil will be made available Ex-Works/FCA at **KG-D6 Onshore Terminal (OT), Gadimoga, Tallarevu Mandal, East Godavari District, State of Andhra Pradesh** or at such other point as agreed between the Parties in writing (the **"Delivery Point"**) for the period **1st February 2024 – 31st December 2024**.

Prospective bidders are requested to visit **https://www.ril.com/eb2b/notices/notice-inviting-tender-sale-of-crude-oil** and download the detailed NIT, which includes instructions to bidders and the Draft Crude Oil Sale Agreement . Prospective bidders are requested to follow instructions as detailed in the NIT to participate in the bidding process.

Inviting bids through the NIT does not in any manner constitute any commitment or obligation on the part of the Sellers to supply KG-D6 Crude Oil unless the same is recorded through a final and binding written COSA executed between the Sellers and the prospective bidder, subject to requisite approvals. The absolute right to award bids rests with the Sellers and the NIT does not impose or create any legally binding obligation whatsoever on the Sellers.

The bids should be submitted as per instructions in NIT by **15:00 hrs IST on 15 January 2024** (**"Bid Due Date"**) and the same will be opened at **16:00 hrs IST on 15 January 2024**.

**Head FC&A – E&P Domestic Business**
**Reliance Industries Limited**
Reliance Corporate Park, Bldg. No. 12, A-Wing, 2nd Floor,
Thane-Belapur Road, Ghansoli, Navi Mumbai - 400 701.

Reliance Industries Limited
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# Text&Context

THE HINDU

## NEWS IN NUMBERS

### Number of private universities set up in the last five years

**140** The majority of private universities were being set up in Gujarat (28) followed by Maharashtra (15), according to the Ministry of Education statistics. The maximum number of universities were established in 2018-19. PTI

### Infrastructure projects hit by cost overruns in November this year

**421** Infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of ₹150 crore or more, were hit by cost overrun of more than ₹4.40 lakh crore in November this year, an official report said. Out of 1,831 projects, 845 projects were delayed. PTI

### Number of cases of child malnutrition in Thane district

**1,000** Currently, there are 83 cases of `severe acute malnutrition'. 'Kuposhan Muktisathi Dattak-Palak Abhiyan' has been undertaken in which officials will adopt one child and take care of him/her. PTI

### People detained in Sri Lanka in a drug crackdown

**15,000** Sri Lanka's police announced the arrests of a military-backed anti-narcotics drive, a crackdown denounced by rights activists. 13,666 suspects were arrested. AFP

### India's first win against Australia in Women's Test cricket

**1** After losing four of their last 10 matches, six of which ended in draws, the Indian women won their first Test match against Australia at the Wankhede stadium in Mumbai today.

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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# India's revised criminal law proposals

Why were the British-era criminal laws in India proposed to be replaced by revised Bills, and what were the main legislative areas targeted for change? How does the inclusion of UAPA's definition of a 'terrorist act' in the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023 differ from the previous definition included in the original Bill?

EXPLAINER

Aaratrika Bhaumik

**The story so far:**

Union Home Minister Amit Shah introduced three revised Bills in the Lok Sabha to replace British-era criminal laws: the Indian Penal Code (IPC) will be replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023; the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) by the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023; and the Indian Evidence Act by the Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, 2023. The Bills underwent review by a Parliamentary Standing Committee, leading to corrections of errors and over 50 recommended changes highlighted by Opposition MPs. Mr. Shah clarified that the revised Bills address suggestions and were introduced to avoid numerous official amendments.

Here are the key highlights of the revised Bills.

**Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023**

Section 113 of the revised Bill has modified the definition of the crime of terrorism to entirely adopt the existing definition under Section 15 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA). The UAPA, often labeled as draconian, is defined as a terrorist act 'with intent to threaten or likely to threaten the unity, integrity, economic security, or sovereignty of India or with intent to strike terror or likely to strike terror in the people or any section of the people in India or any foreign country.'

The earlier version of the Bill included within the ambit of a terrorist act, vague acts such as intimidating the general public or a segment thereof, disturbing public order, creating an atmosphere or spreading a message of fear; destabilising or destroying the political, economic, or social structures of the country, or creating a public emergency or undermining public safety. Accordingly, even non-violent speech could be categorised as a terrorist act under this definition.

However, the new definition differs from the UAPA's definition in one respect – UAPA includes the production or smuggling or circulation only of high quality counterfeit Indian paper currency, coin, or any other material within the ambit of terrorism, whereas the revised Bill widens this definition to cover the same activities concerning any counterfeit Indian paper currency, coin or of any other material.

Further, possessing property derived from or through a terrorist act is punishable only if held knowingly. Similarly, harbouring a terrorist is punishable if it is done both voluntarily and knowingly. The offence of recruiting and training persons to engage in terrorist acts has been introduced, mirroring sections 18A and 18B of the UAPA.

Notably, the Explanation to this section allows an officer not below the rank of Superintendent of Police to decide if the prosecution of a terrorist act should continue under the UAPA or section 113 of this Bill.

The offence is punishable by death or imprisonment for life. Those who conspire, abet, incite, or facilitate the commission of a terrorist act could face imprisonment ranging from five years to life.

**Cruelty defined**

Another addition to the revised Bill is that it proposes to define "cruelty" against a woman by her husband and his relatives, which is punishable with a jail term of up to three years. The newly inserted section 86 defines 'cruelty' as (a) wilful conduct likely to drive a woman to commit suicide or cause grave injury or danger to the life, limb, or health (whether mental or physical); or (b) harassment of a woman to coerce her or any person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for property or valuable security.

**Legal reform:** Union Minister Amit Shah speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon session of Parliament in New Delhi. ANI

Although the offence has now been defined in a separate provision, Section 498A of the IPC and Section 84 in the original Bill defined cruelty using the same terms in their "explanation" clauses. Therefore, there is no new addition in effect in the revised Bill.

**Court proceedings**

The newly inserted section 73 stipulates that those who print or publish 'any matter' concerning court proceedings in rape or sexual assault cases without permission would be punished with a two-year jail sentence and a fine. The Explanation to this provision clarifies that reports on High Court or Supreme Court judgments would not amount to an offence within this provision.'

In an attempt to do away with regressive terminology, the earlier version of the Bill had replaced terms such as lunacy, mental retardation, and unsoundness of mind with 'mental illness.' However, the panel pointed out that the term 'mental illness' is too wide in its import and could even include mood swings and voluntary intoxication. As a result, the revised Bill replaces the term 'mental illness' with 'unsoundness of mind' in a majority of the provisions. It has added the term 'intellectual disability' along with unsoundness of mind in section 367 (competence to stand trial).

The original Bill made mob lynching and hate crime a separate category of murder for the first time. The offence dealt with cases where murder is committed by five or more persons acting in concert with one another, on grounds of race, caste or community, sex, place of birth, language, personal belief, or any other ground. However, it was criticised by the panel for prescribing a lesser minimum sentence of imprisonment of 7 years as opposed to the offence of murder, where the minimum sentence is imprisonment for life. The revised Bill has now removed the minimum punishment of seven years and now penalises mob lynching at par with murder.

**Ignored recommendations**

Two crucial recommendations of the panel to include a gender-neutral provision criminalising adultery, and a clause that criminalises non-consensual sex between men, women, transpersons, and acts of bestiality has been left out in the revised Bill. In 2018, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court unanimously decriminalised adultery for being discriminatory and infringing upon a woman's autonomy. However, the panel reasoned that adultery should be criminalised in a gender-neutral manner since it is crucial to safeguard the sanctity of the institution of marriage.

The panel pointed out, "Section 377 IPC can still be invoked when there is a nonconsensual sex/rape of a man by another man. A woman can also initiate proceedings against her husband for unnatural sex under Section 377 IPC. If, as per the Nyaya Sanhita, these acts are not offences, it means that the victims of sodomy, buggery, etc. will have no remedy available under it. So if a man is 'raped' by another man, what is his remedy?" Thus, this leaves men and transgender persons with no legal remedy against sexual offences.

**'Petty organised crime'**

The revised Bill includes a more precise definition of 'petty organised crime': Whoever, being a member of a group or gang, either singly or jointly, commits any act of theft, snatching, cheating, unauthorised selling of tickets, unauthorised betting or gambling, selling of public examination question papers or any other similar criminal act, is said to commit petty organised crime.' The Explanation to this provision stipulates that theft would include trick theft, theft from a vehicle, dwelling house, or business premises, cargo theft, pickpocketing, theft through card skimming, shoplifting, and theft of an Automated Teller Machine.

**Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023**

The original Bill introduced the concept of 'community service' as a form of punishment for petty offences such as an attempt to commit suicide, public servants unlawfully engaged in trade, theft of property less than ₹5,000, public intoxication, and defamation. This punishment has now been defined under Section 23 of the revised Bill. Community service is 'work which the court may order a convict to perform as a form of punishment that benefits the community, for which he shall not be entitled to any remuneration.' Moreover, a Magistrate of the First or Second Class has been specifically empowered to impose this punishment, to encourage a more reparative approach to minor crimes.

**Power of police**

Section 43(3) of the original Bill permitted the use of handcuffs to prevent the escape of individuals accused of serious offences and ensure the safety of police officers and staff during arrests. However, the panel recommended that this should be restricted to select heinous crimes like rape and murder instead of extending its usage to persons who have been accused of committing 'economic offences.' In another change, the power of the police to use handcuffs has been expanded beyond the time of arrest to include the stage of production before court as well.

**Conduct of court**

The original Bill permitted the conduct of court proceedings through audio-visual means. However, certain types of proceedings mentioned in the earlier draft have been deleted, including inquiries, trials before court of sessions, trials in summary cases, plea bargaining, and trials before High Courts. Meanwhile, the provisions allowing the reading out of charge to the accused, hearing on discharge, examination of witnesses, and recording of evidence in audio-visual means have been introduced in the revised Bill in sections 251, 262, 266, and 308 respectively.

**Police custody**

The revised Bill has overlooked the concerns of the panel regarding a provision in the earlier version that allowed police custody beyond the initial 15 days of arrest.

Section 187(3) of the Bill, which corresponds to Section 167 (2)(a) of the CrPC, does not contain the phrase 'otherwise than in the custody of the police' – implying that the prescribed 15-day-period of police custody can now be an aggregate of shorter periods of custody sought over the entire period of an investigation lasting 60 or 90 days (depending on the nature of the offence.)

Since people, particularly those hailing from marginalised backgrounds, may be subjected to extreme custodial violence, the panel underscored that "there is a concern that this clause could be vulnerable to misuse by authorities, as it does not explicitly clarify that the custody was not taken in the first 15 days either due to the conduct of the accused or due to extraneous circumstances beyond the control of the investigating officer. The committee recommends that a suitable amendment be brought to provide greater clarity in the interpretation of this clause.

Accordingly, under the revised Bill, the detained person must now be produced before the Magistrate or released in petty cases within 24 hours.

**Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, 2023**

Section 61 of the original Bill allowed the admissibility of electronic evidence by underscoring that an electronic record shall have the same legal effect as a paper record. However, there was no requirement for a certificate under section 63 (corresponding to the requirement of a certificate under section 65B of the Indian Evidence Act). This provision has now been revised to state that the admissibility of an electronic record is subject to section 63.

**Existing concerns**

Experts have flagged that the three revised Bills present a missed opportunity to rectify extensive over criminalisation and wider police powers that aggravate State control.

Pointing out that the provision of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023, which permits police custody beyond the initial 15 days of arrest endangers civil liberties, Dr. Anup Surendranath and Ms. Zeba Sikora highlights, "The massive expansion of the possible duration of police custody in the BNSS strikes at the very heart of civil liberties protection. The BNSS expands the maximum limit of police custody under general criminal law from 15 days to either 60 days or 90 days (depending on the nature of the offence). Under our current law, police custody is limited to the first 15 days of arrest. The expansion under the proposed BNSS heightens the risk of exposure to police excesses. Given widely acknowledged concerns about the safety of arrested persons in police custody, and the heightened risk of coerced and fabricated evidence after prolonged detention, this provision of the BNSS is a shocking expansion of police powers."

## THE GIST

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah introduced three revised Bills in the Lok Sabha to replace British-era criminal laws: the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Indian Evidence Act.
- The Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023 incorporates UAPA's definition of 'terrorist act' and defines 'cruelty' against women while enhancing punishment for 'mob lynching.'
- The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, 2023 introduces 'community service' as punishment and expands police powers regarding handcuff usage and extends police custody beyond the initial 15 days of arrest.
- The Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill, 2023 revises the admissibility of electronic evidence.
- Concerns raised by experts focus on the extended police custody duration proposed in the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita, posing potential risks to civil liberties due to increased exposure to police excesses and the potential for coerced evidence.

# Disgruntlement in BJP over list of office-bearers

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

A day after the awaited reconstitution of the BJP office-bearers was announced, the party was struck with dissidence by senior leaders, with the MLA from Vijayapura Basanagouda Patil Yatnal's outburst embarrassing the party again, while former Union Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda expressed his displeasure.

The new appointments, coming after B.Y. Vijayendra took over as the president of the State unit, are being seen as those in favour of the former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa's camp and have been frowned upon by these leaders.

"Mr. Yediyurappa's team was KJP 1 when he had left the party and formed the Karnataka Janata Party. This is KJP 2 within the BJP. His grandson will form KJP 3 later. They are saying with this team, the BJP will win all the 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka. This will collapse like a pack of cards after the results even if they fall short of winning one seat," Mr. Yatnal told presspersons in Vijayapura on Sunday.

Commenting on his name not being part of the new office-bearers' list, he remarked: "How will it have my name? We are workers of the nation. There is no value-based politics now and politics is filled with looters."

Mr. Yatnal has remained disgruntled after the appointment of Mr. Vijayendra, son of Mr. Yediyurappa, as the BJP State president and of R. Ashok as the Leader of the Opposition. Though publicly he has denied it, Mr. Yatnal was interested in one of the positions and has been embarrassing the party with his public criticism since then. He, along with several leaders from North Karnataka, had pointed to a lack of representation to the region as both appointments were seen as those given to Old Mysore region.

Mr. Gowda, MP from Bengaluru North, felt that

> Mr. Yediyurappa's team was KJP 1 when he left the party and formed the Karnataka Janata Party. This is KJP 2 within the BJP. His grandson will form KJP 3 later.
>
> **BASANAGOUDA PATIL YATNAL,** MLA

there could be some problems in the list, and clarified that he would not term the team as inefficient.

He said that the leaders from Delhi should have discussed with senior leaders in the State before announcing the list.

However, Mr. Yediyurappa told reporters in Davangere that the list had been prepared considering all aspects. "A good team has been selected and is based on the opinion of all. This is not in anyone's favour but in the favour of the BJP."

He, however, refused to comment on the criticism of Mr. Yatnal.

## First meeting tomorrow

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

BJP State president B.Y. Vijayendra will be holding the first meeting of the new office-bearers of the party in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

Disclosing this to presspersons in Bengaluru, Mr. Vijayendra maintained that the list had been prepared by taking into account representation for different regions.

He also claimed that the list had given adequate representation to the youth, while also honouring the presence of seniors.

# Don't describe yourselves as Hindus: Veerashaiva Mahasabha to community

Asking the government not to accept the Kantharaj panel report, Veerashaiva Mahasabha says a fresh census should be conducted in a scientific way, and it should enumerate social, educational, and economic status of all castes, including sub-castes of the Veerashaiva-Lingayat groups

**The Hindu Bureau**
BELAGAVI

Demanding a fresh caste census based on scientific mode, the Veerashaiva Mahasabha has urged the community members not to describe themselves as Hindus in the forthcoming population census or caste census. This was among the eight resolutions adopted by delegates to the Veerashaiva Mahasabha rally in Davangere on Sunday.

"All community members should not use the term Hindu for describing their religion in the next census. They should shun names of sub-castes. They should only use terms Veerashaiva or Lingayat to describe themselves. This is for the good of society and to tell the world about the specific numbers of our community," resolution number five has said.

The other resolutions include a demand for a fresh caste census. The State government should not accept the Kantharaj panel report. The socio-economic survey of the various communities or caste census in the State is eight years old and its contents are believed to have been leaked. A fresh census should be conducted scientifically and it should enumerate social, educational, and economic status of all castes, including the sub-castes of the Veerashaiva-Lingayat groups.

B.S. Yediyurappa, former Chief Minister, and other dignitaries during the Akhila Bharata Veerashaiva Mahasabha event in Davangere on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The rally urged the State government to send a proposal to the Union government recommending Central OBC status to all sub-communities of Veerashaiva Lingayats.

"This will help the millions of community members who live in poverty," a resolution said.

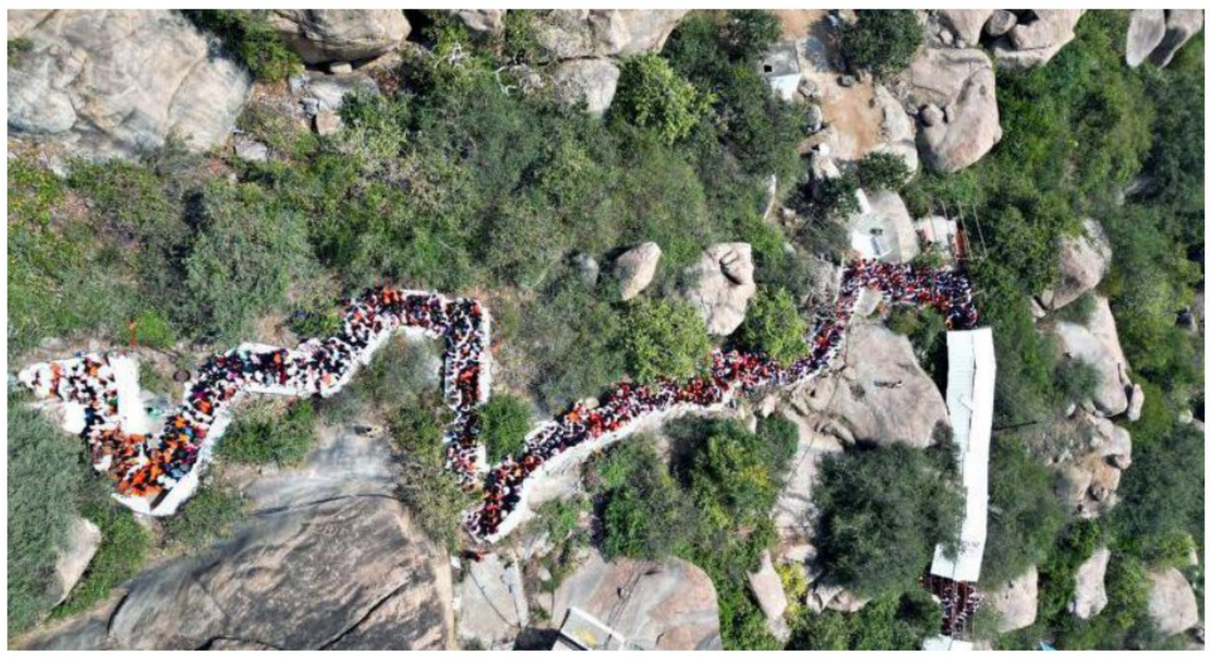
The State government should declare Basavanna to be the cultural leader of the State. His ideology is eternally relevant to the world, the mahasabha said.

The mahasabha also passed a resolution to support all agitations that are aimed at protecting the unity and integrity of the country and national security. The mahasabha demanded that the State government buy the house where the former Chief Minister S. Nijalingappa lived in Chitradurga and develop it into a national monument.

Mahasabha president Shamanur Shivashankarappa, MLA, read out the resolutions at the valedictory meeting of the 24th annual convention. They were adopted unanimously.

Minister Eshwar Khandre, leaders B.Y. Vijayendra, Basavaraj Bommai, and N. Thippanna, Go. Ru. Channabasappa, writer, and others were present.

## *Pious followers*



An aerial view of devotees climbing up Anjanadri Hills in Koppal district to participate in the Hanuma Mala Visarjan on Sunday. Thousands of devotees from different parts of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Maharashtra thronged the place. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

# 'Voters will decide whether I'm a patriot or traitor'

**The Hindu Bureau**
MYSURU

Mysuru MP Pratap Simmha, who had approved Lok Sabha passes to two persons accused of breaching security in Parliament earlier this month, said the voters of Kodagu and Mysuru will decide if he is a traitor or a patriot.

Mr. Simmha was responding to allegations against him during protests in Mysuru over the MP's role in the security breach.

The people of Kodagu and Mysuru will give a verdict on whether he is a patriot or a traitor during the elections to Lok Sabha scheduled to be held in April 2024, he said, adding that they were the "ultimate judges" in the matter.

"Goddess Chamundeshwari of Chamundi Hills, Cauvery of Brahmagiri Hills, the readers across Karnataka of my columns for the last 20 years and the people who have seen my conduct in matters related to the country, religion and nationalism during the last nine-and-a-half years will decide on the issue during the Lok Sabha elections in April, 2024," Mr. Simmha said.

Mr. Simmha is accused of approving passes to Manoranjan and Sagar Sharma to enter the visitors' gallery in the Lok Sabha on December 13.

# Hariprasad's remarks ruffle BJP's feathers

**The Hindu Bureau**
BELAGAVI

The BJP leaders launched a fresh tirade against the Congress, after MLC B.K. Hariprasad's remarks that "those who term us (the Congress) as Tipu Sultan's followers were bootlickers of the British" ruffled their feathers.

"When the Congress leaders were involved in the freedom movement, those in the RSS had accepted their rule and were subservient to the British," Mr. Hariprasad told presspersons in Hubballi on Sunday.

He was responding to queries about some leaders of the BJP, like Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, criticising the Congress over the assurance of revocation of the hijab ban.

**'Majority appeasement'**

"The BJP leaders say we are practising minority appeasement. Should we say they are appeasing the majority? The Congress has always been with the common man and the poor and the marginalised. The BJP, on the other hand, has no concern for the plight of farmers, women, and the common man. While we are protecting the Constitutional values of equality, fraternity, and equal opportunity, the BJP is busy dividing society on caste and religion. That is the difference between us and them," he said.

He said that he was in favour of revoking the hijab ban. "Issues like attire and food are matters of personal choice. I also feel that while women can be allowed to wear burqa outside the college, they should be allowed to wear hijab in the classroom," he said.

Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje launched a counterattack at Mr. Hariprasad by wondering what he knew about the British Raj? "We know who were the bootlickers. If you try to dig into history, your face will get blackened," she remarked.

Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R. Ashok also slammed Mr. Hariprasad and stated that the Congress leader had become desperate.

# Hijab issue: 'CM has gone back on stand after BJP's criticism'

**The Hindu Bureau**
BENGALURU

Continuing the attack on Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over the hijab ban, former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Sunday said that the CM had gone back on his statement after the BJP attacked him.

"We are not opposed to minorities. Mr. Siddaramaiah should stop sowing the seeds of hatred. It will also not help. Because we all opposed it, he has gone back on his statement," he told presspersons in Davangere on Sunday.

Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok told presspersons in Bengaluru that the Congress was peddling communal politics by eulogising Tipu Sultan.

In Mandya, right-wing leader Kalladka Prabhakar Bhat said that Hindus would wear 'kesari' shawls if the hijab is allowed. "When there is a rule on uniform and everyone is asked to wear it, why is it (hijab) being allowed?"

## CORRIDORS OF POWER

**A string of 'polarising' debates**

A few months ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress government, led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah *(pictured)*, is drawing criticism from the Opposition BJP for "polarising the electorate."

In the latest instance, the Chief Minister's announcement that he would revoke the controversial order by the previous BJP government banning hijab in classrooms has sparked off a fresh debate across the country. The issue is before the Supreme Court and the BJP in the State condemned the statement and termed it "vote bank politics."

A few days ago, the Chief Minister's assurance at a Muslim convention that he wanted to increase the Budget outlay for minorities to ₹10,000 crore had created a ruckus during the winter session of the legislature in Belagavi. A suggestion by a Congress MLA that Mysuru airport could be named after Tipu Sultan, the 18th century Mysuru ruler, also drew criticism from the BJP. Minister B.Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan's statement that the BJP leaders stand before Assembly Speaker U.T. Khader saying 'Sahab Namaskar' too has not gone down well with the Opposition parties.

**Dousing dissidence**

With discontent among the Karnataka BJP leaders becoming evident and some expressing their dissatisfaction openly on various matters, maintaining unity in the State unit of the BJP has become a herculean task for the newly appointed president B.Y. Vijayendra *(pictured)*.

In a move to douse the discontent, the State BJP chief recently called on the Central party leaders in an attempt to appoint new office-bearers and galvanise the cadre. In fact, he succeeded in getting it sanctioned by Saturday, comprising several youngsters.

Senior leaders such as V. Somanna, MLAs Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, Aravind Bellad, and former MLA Aravind Limbavali have raised their voices on the appointment of Mr. Vijayendra.

The Central leaders reportedly told the State BJP chief to face the growing challenges and navigate internal dynamics to ensure unity ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

*Nagesh Prabhu*

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

SAD DEMISE

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RETD GSK
LEFT FOR HIS HEAVENLY ABODE ON 23.12.2023

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"He lives in us forever"
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Our love, Our Life

*Deeply Mourned by*

Lakshmi(Chinni), Sriram, Sangeetha

Family and Friends

DEATH

In loving memory of

Smt.NAGALAKSHMI.T.A
(91 Years)

W/o Late.Sri.R.T.NATHAN
Retd. NMDC Ltd.,
*Passed away on 17-12-2023*
Mourned by
Sons, Daughter, Daughters in law and Grandchildren

Dasasthu on 26-12-2023
at Sathyanarayana Theertham, Besant Nagar, Chennai.
Cell : 7418 46 36 40

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE

DR. EMMA GONSALVEZ
1932 - 2014

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GETTY IMAGES

# Why ransomware attacks on Indian IT firms are a cause for concern?

The recent ransomware incident at HCL Technologies, though contained in a restricted cloud environment without apparent widespread impact, negatively influenced its stock market perception; This event reflects the escalating threat of ransomware attacks on Indian organisations

**Nabeel Ahmed**

On 20 December, IT services provider HCL Technologies, in its quarterly report, shared that it was hit by a ransomware incident within a restricted cloud environment. Following the attack, the company stated there was no "observable" impact on the overall HCL Tech network. However, news of the attack affected the company's perception of the stock market, leading to a decline in its share prices.

**What do we know of the ransomware attack on HCL Tech?**

HCL Tech is an Indian information technology company providing solutions in the digital realm, including end-to-end digital offerings, cloud-based solutions, and software.

The company is one of the top software solution providers in India.

On 20th December, the company, in its quarterly earnings report, shared that it was hit by a ransomware incident in an isolated cloud environment.

The company, however, did not disclose specific details of the attack.

HCL Tech further stated that cybersecurity and data protection are top priorities.

A detailed investigation, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, was launched to assess the root cause.

Ransomware is extortion software designed to lock or encrypt a device or data on a system and then demand a ransom for its release.

The attacks follow a simple plan wherein attackers gain access to a device or protected data in the cloud.

Depending on the nature of the ransomware, it will then lock or encrypt devices, data stored in the cloud, or the entire internal network of an organisation.

Attackers usually leave behind a message with instructions on the ransom amount, mode of transfer, or instructions on how to contact them for further guidance.

**Why are ransomware attacks a matter of concern?**

Indian organisations are increasingly targeted by ransomware attacks.

A 2023 study conducted by Sophos, a cybersecurity company, showed that 73% of organisations reported being victims of ransomware attacks, up from 57% the previous year.

Of these, 77% of organisations reported that attackers succeeded in encrypting data, with 44% paying the ransom to retrieve their data, a significant drop from 78% compared to the previous year.

However, despite paying the ransom, companies doubled their cost of recovery for the data held hostage by threat actors compared to organisations that did not pay the ransom and relied on backups.

Additionally, according to the Indian ransomware report released by India's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), a 51% increase in ransomware incidents was reported in H1 2022, with a majority of these attacks targeting data centres, IT, and TeS sectors in the country.

**Why do threat actors target IT organisations?**

Threat actors tend to focus their attacks on organisations that hold valuable data. The more value the data has to the organisation and its stakeholders, the higher the chances that the ransom will be paid.

IT organisations and software vendors hold a lot of valuable data, including sensitive information like intellectual property.

If leaked by threat actors, it could lead to a drop in their value and replication of software, devaluing the company and threatening its revenue streams, making them a valuable target for cybercriminals. IT organisations providing cloud security and data solutions also hold large repositories of data for their clients. Successful attacks on them could potentially open the channel to target supply chains, adding pressure on companies to pay the ransom.

Data held by IT organisations could include personally identifiable data of clients' users, intellectual property, access credentials, and even financial information. This data can be leveraged to launch further attacks. IT organisations are also among the first to adopt new technologies and encourage the use of open architecture, which may not have the highest levels of protection against cyberattacks, making them a target for cybercriminals.

**Which other Indian organisations faced ransomware attacks?**

Earlier this year, in November, a U.S.-based subsidiary of Infosys was reportedly targeted by a ransomware attack. At the time, Infosys McCamish Systems faced an incident involving a ransomware variant.

However, the company did not share details of the attack, stating that further information would be provided following a comprehensive investigation.

In March, Indian drug manufacturer Sun Pharma was hit by a cyberattack.

A ransomware group claimed responsibility for the attack, impacting the company's revenue due to containment measures implemented to mitigate the damage.

In November 2022, a ransomware attack crippled the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) for days. Hackers reportedly demanded ₹200 crores in cryptocurrency from the hospital.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

## A quiz on lesser-known facts about Sir Isaac Newton whose birthday is observed on December 25

**V. V. Ramanan**

**QUESTION 1**

Though he was born on Christmas Day according to the Julian calendar in use in England at the time, what is his birthday as per the New Style dating system?

**QUESTION 2**

The reclusive Newton's famous work 'Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica' (Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy) was published only after a famous astronomer urged him to do so. Name the astronomer.

**QUESTION 3**

According to Newton, who believed that God had chosen him specifically to interpret the Bible and worked on the Biblical chronology, when will the Apocalypse happen?

**QUESTION 4**

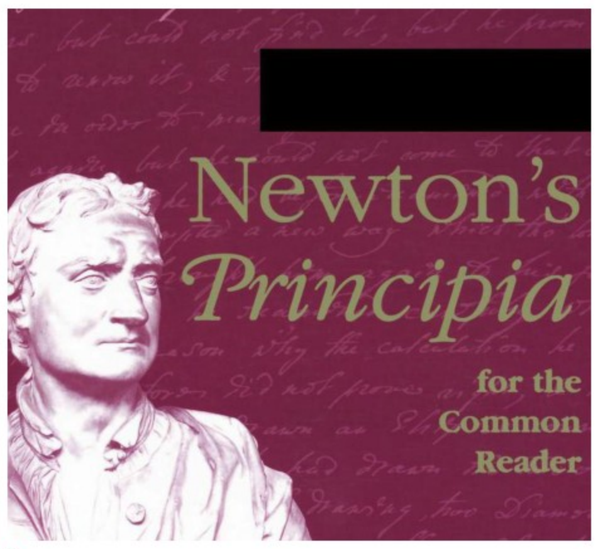
Politically tied to the Whig party, Newton served two brief terms (1689–1690 and 1701–1702) as Member of Parliament for which constituency?

**QUESTION 5**

For about three decades, one of Newton's realms of activity was (as it was often called in 17th century England) 'chymistry'. What is the more common term for 'chymistry'?

**QUESTION 6**

Newton's famous remark 'If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants' forms part of a letter to a fellow scientist about the latter's work on optics. Name the recipient of the letter.




**Visual Question**

Which Indian Nobel Laureate wrote this commentary explaining what Newton wrote?

**Questions and answers to the previous day's daily quiz:** 1. With over 8,00,000 people from one minority group killed in 100 days, this genocide is considered one of the worst violations of human rights, globally. **Ans: The Rwandan genocide**
2. Who is known as the Father of the Declaration of Human Rights? **Ans: René Cassin**
3. Across the world the debate rages on about a woman's right to make sexual decisions for herself. What significant event in 2012 added heft to this battle? **Ans: In 2012, the UN declared birth control and access to contraception a basic human right**
4. The UN Declaration of Human Rights set a world record in 1999. **Ans: The most translated document in the world. The Bible remains the most translated book in the world.**
5. December 2023 marks the —— anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. **Ans: 75th**
Visual: Name the object and its connection with human rights. **Ans: The Cyrus Cylinder is an ancient clay cylinder, from the 6th century B.C. It has has been recognised as the world's first charter of human rights.**

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

# *They're not on the same wavelength*

Manager and the workers are not in agreement as to how they should be carried out

**S. Upendran**

"Are things at the office back to normal? Have all the alterations been made?"

"No, they haven't! And it's unlikely to happen anytime soon."

"Why do you say that? It's just a few things that need to be..."

"The changes that need to be made are quite simple. But unfortunately, the Manager and the workers are not in agreement as to how they should be carried out. They're not on the same wavelength."

"Not on the same wavelength? Does it mean that they are not in agreement?"

"I guess you could say that. When you say that two people are on the same wavelength, what you're suggesting is that the two understand each other very well."

"It's probably because they think alike."

"Exactly!"

"I enjoy working with Ganesh because the two of us are usually on the same wavelength."

" By the way, I ran into Sujatha on my way here. Said she was going to be spending her vacation in the Maldives."

"It's more a bizcation."

"Bizcation?"

"It's a combination of two words - business and vacation."

"So, a 'bizcation' is when you combine business and pleasure."

"That's right! You go somewhere on business. Once the work has been completed, you stay on for a few days and relax."

"In other words, when the business part is over, you do what most travellers do. You go sightseeing, relax on the beach, etc."

"Exactly! You do things that you enjoy doing. Bizcations are not my idea of fun."

"Another word that is frequently used to refer to this kind of vacation is 'bleisure'."

"Did you say 'pleasure'?"

"No, the word is spelt b..l..e..i..s..u..r..e. It's a combination of 'business' and 'leisure'. It rhymes with 'pleasure'. Sujatha's trip to the Maldives is not really a vacation. It's what I'd call a bleisure trip."

"How about this example? According to my travel agent, bleisure travel is on the rise."

"That's a good example."

"Where do you plan on going?"

"I'm afraid it's going to be a staycation for me."

"Staycation?"

"Staycation is a combination of 'stay' and 'vacation'. When you're on 'staycation', you spend your vacation at home."

"In other words, you're going to be in India for your vacation. I hope you're going somewhere within our country."

"No, I'm not. As I said 'staycation' suggests staying at home. It can, however, involve day trips. You leave in the morning and return home in the evening."

"Staycation is certainly not my idea of a vacation."

"It isn't mine either. But given my current situation, staycation is the only option."

"Why do you say that? You could go anywhere you...."

"You forget that my first big down payment on my new flat is due next month."

"Oh, yes! You must be really excited!"

*upendrankye@gmail.com*

## Word of the day

**Wry:**
Humorously sarcastic or mocking

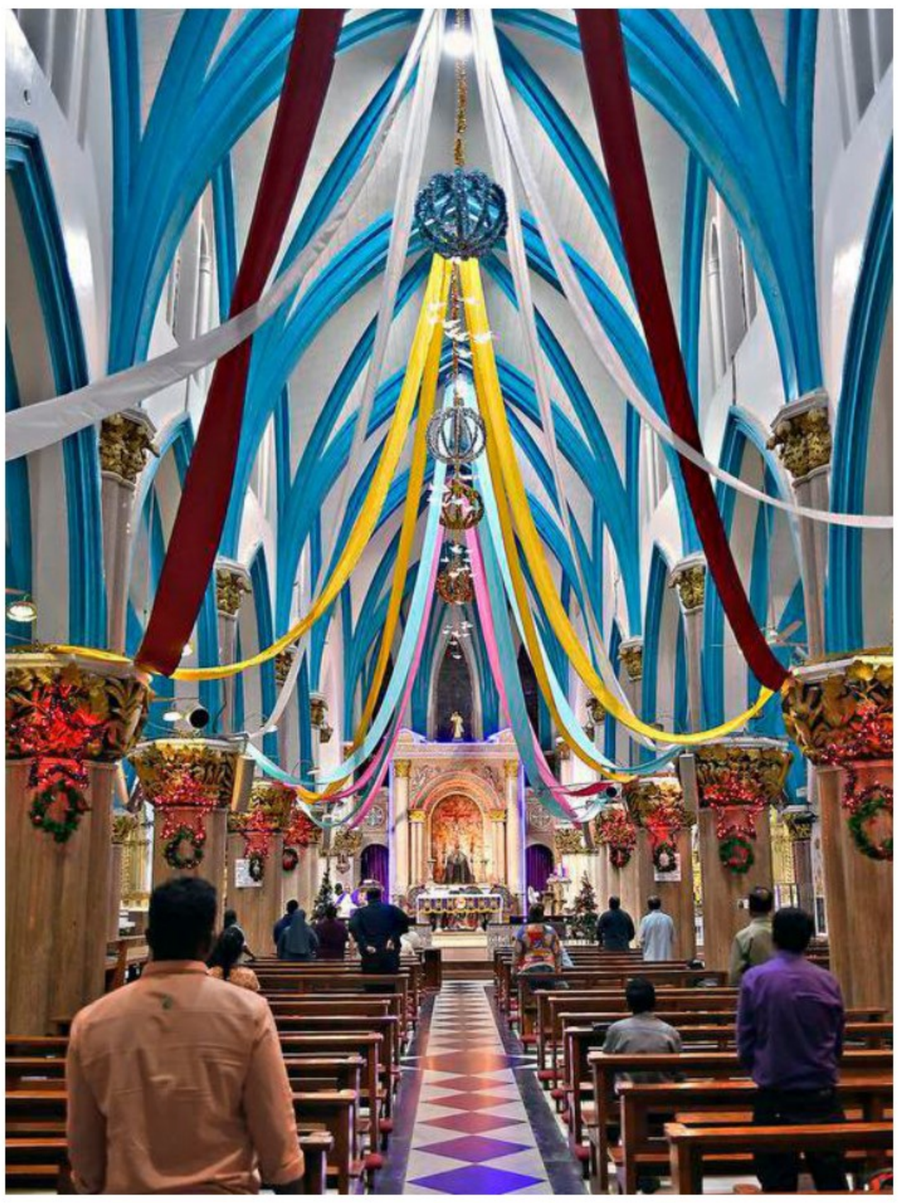
**Synonyms:** ironic, derisive, witty

**Usage:** *She has a wry sense of humour.*

**Pronunciation:** bit.ly/wrypro

**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /raɪ/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

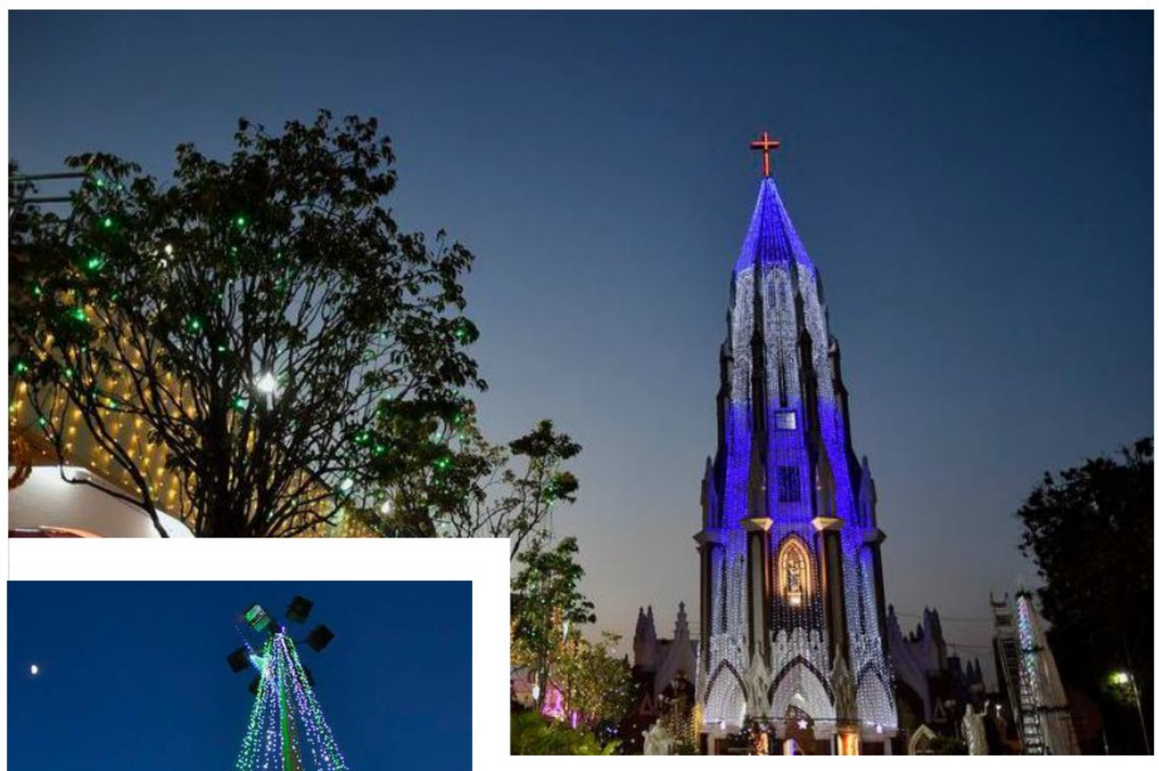


# The season of good cheer

Christmas is here and the city is all geared up to celebrate the festive season. Churches like St. Mary's Basilica, one of the oldest Christian worship houses in the city, are tinselled with fairy lights and streamers while carolling groups have been making their rounds, ending night-long singing sessions with cake and mulled wine.

Christmas trees and stars have been taken out of lofts and closets, brandy-soaked fruit have finally made their way into cakes and puddings and meats are being basted for the festive meal.

And yes, what is Christmas without a little bit of shopping? The city markets have come alive, filled with ornaments, trees, stars, and candles, as people throng to them to buy new clothes and gifts. **(Photos by Bhagya Prakash K. and K. Murali Kumar)**



# *Unique trees, unicorns and angels bring in Christmas cheer to Bengaluru*

Malls have also installed several Christmas-themed installations to bring in the festive cheer to their shoppers

**Ayush Savarn**
BENGALURU

How unique can a Christmas tree be? It can be made up of wooden triangles or it can be a digital tree. Churches and malls in Bengaluru are ushering in the Christmas spirit with innovative ideas for the traditional Christmas tree.

The Mar Thoma Syrian Church, in Ashok Nagar, has redefined the traditional Christmas tree with a sustainable twist. The church opted for a handmade wooden structure, consisting of two triangles, one bigger than the other. This eco-conscious choice reflects a commitment to responsible celebrations, aligning with the church's past endeavors in sustainability, the organisers said.

**Modern twist**

"The design of the tree was chosen by the younger generation within the community, adding a touch of modernity to the festive tradition. However, the innovation doesn't stop with the tree's design. The hollow centre of this wooden masterpiece is stringed full of notes adorned with messages and paper decorations.

Congregants and visitors alike are encouraged to contribute messages of love, hope, and goodwill, transforming the tree into a symbol of unity and shared joy," said Jason Andrews, a member of the Church.

He added that post-Christmas, the wooden triangles will be repurposed to create bookshelves for children in underprivileged schools. "Furthermore, the paper notes, instead of ending up in the waste stream, will be recycled into notebooks, promoting a circular and environmentally friendly approach to holiday festivities," Mr. Andrews said.

Elsewhere, in a celebration of cutting-edge technology, Orion Mall at Brigade Gateway in Rajaji Nagar has introduced reportedly India's first and largest digital Christmas tree. "Standing tall at a height of 85 feet, this tree is illuminated by energy-efficient LEDs, and it also displays captivating animations that include snowflakes, Santa Claus, Season's greetings, and more," said Rahul Malhotra, Spokesperson, Orion Mall.

Miniature versions of the tree which are 30 feet tall have also been erected at Orion Uptown Mall at Whitefield - Hoskote Junction and Orion Avenue Mall at Cooke Town, he said.

**Angels and movie nights**

Not just trees, but the malls have also installed several Christmas themed installations to bring in the festive cheer to their shoppers.

The Nexus Shantiniketan Mall in Whitefield has a unique unicorn installation for Christmas while the Nexus Koramanagala Mall has an installation of an angel whose wings are illuminated in a hue of pink. "It serves as a beacon of hope and goodwill. The mall is also hosting a movie series under the open sky, with showings of Christmas movies like Home Alone, Harry Potter and the Goodwill movies," said Nishank Joshi, Chief Marketing Officer, Nexus Select Trust.

Orion Mall at Brigade Gateway has introduced a digital Christmas tree. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Christmas tree at Nexus Koramangala. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Unicorn installation at Nexus Shantiniketan Mall.

**FROM THE ARCHIVES**
The Hindu.

**FIFTY YEARS AGO** DECEMBER 25, 1973

## Disappointed 'Left Hand'

Bangalore, Dec.23: Two Congress MLAs belonging to what is called the "Left-hand Sect" of the Harijans have opposed the appointment of Mr. N. Rachiah, as Cabinet Minister, allegedly in disregard of the "unanimous opinion" of seven out of the eight "Left-hand Sect" Harijan MLAs. Mr. Rachiah, also belongs to the "Left-hand Sect" and is an MLC.

In a press statement, Messrs Doddathimmiah and K. Prabhakar, MLAs said that when they called on the Chief Minister, Mr. Devaraj Urs, on December 14, and opposed the inclusion of Mr. Rachiah, the Chief Minister asked them to indicate, in writing, by 3 p.m. that day, as to who among the "Left- hand Sect" MLAs should be considered. Seven out of the eight MLAs told the Chief Minister in writing that he chose anyone but Mr. Rachiah. Nevertheless, the Chief Minister had appointed Rachiah.

At a press conference yesterday, Mr. Rachiah, Social Welfare Minister, claimed that all but two of the "Left-hand Sect" MLAs had retracted from their original opposition to his inclusion in the cabinet.

## ADMK Volunteers Try to Detain Train

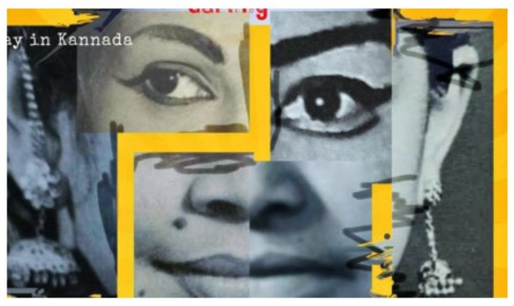
Bangalore, Dec 24: About 200 ADMK volunteers tried to detain the Bangalore-Miraj Express at the city railway station, here this morning, demanding the implementation of the Mahajan Commision Award on the Karnataka-Maharashtra border dispute.

The volunteers squatted on the tracks. They were dispersed by the police.

## CITYBEATS

### Treats and hampers

**ONGOING**
Amiel Gourmet has launched gift hampers with a handcrafted collection of Christmas delights. The vegetarian hampers come with black olive tapenade, tomato jam, homemade boursin and an assortment of bread and crackers.
The non-vegetarian hamper comprises green peppercorn pork terrin, bacon and herbs aperitif bread to name a few. *Priced at ₹1200 plus taxes, Call 8884441259/98458 62027 for takeaways.*



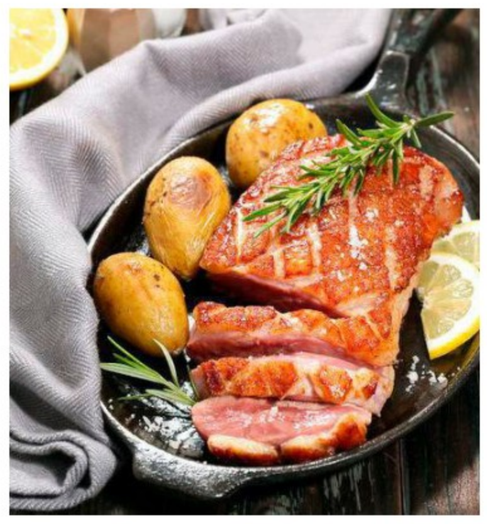

### On stage

**DECEMBER 24**
Watch an experimental play in Kannada, *Project Darling*. The play, directed by Sharanya Ramprakash and presented by Prakash Raj, is a humorous and incisive examination of the facets of female sexuality. *Project Darling* navigates censorship and culture and its place in society. Tickets priced at ₹200 are available on BookMyShow.
*At Ranga Shankara, 3.30pm and 7.30pm.*

### Munch on brunch

**DECEMBER 25**
Called the Yuletide Splendor, this Christmas brunch at BLVD Clubis bound to pamper you with delicacies such as bronzed madeira scampi, grilled lemongrass chili fish, turkey salad and cold cut platters. The brunch is priced at ₹1250 plus taxes for children and ₹2499 upwards plus taxes for adults. *Served between 12.30pm and 4pm. Call 9741129933 to make reservations.*

**Take your pick** There is Continental, Indian and Asian cuisine on offer. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



# Hosts of Christmas present

With Christmas eve falling on a Sunday this year, give yourself a break from the kitchen and extended festivities by treating yourself to a very merry meal on Christmas Day at any one of these places...

**Ruth Dhanaraj**

**Classic take**
It may not be a white Christmas in Bengaluru, but Chophouse by the Biere Club, is presenting an English-inspired Christmas. Chef Shaun Kenworthy has whipped up classic starters such as smoked salmon caviar on mini crumpets, scotch quail eggs, fresh figs with blue cheese and fresh brandied chicken livers on toast.

Follow these up with traditional pepper roast beef tenderloin, roast pork with apple cider sauce or roast turkey with cauliflower puree. Vegetarians need not despair – a decadent jackfruit, lentil and root vegetable moussaka is among the vegan options on the menu.

Needless to say, Christmas pudding flambé with hot brandy sauce as well as spiced eggnog, winter ales and mulled wine will round up your meal.

The Christmas menu will continue throughout the holiday season from 12pm to 1am. For reservations, call 099867 69776.

**Sugar and spice**
This all-day casual bar gets a touch of the holiday fever with their Christmas Day specials. Start with a green Grinch salad of baby greens, walnuts and apple with raspberry vinaigrette before moving on to pistachio crusted sea scallops served in a butter garlic sauce or a mini shepherd's pie.

There is a choice of Santa's spinach and ricotta cannelloni, a North Pole pan-seared salmon served with sauteed Swiss chard, artichoke and citrus couscous, grilled French chicken breast with duchess potatoes and steamed greens or Rudolph's rack of lamb chops with green pea mash and hasselback potatoes as accompaniments.

If you have space for dessert, indulge in a holiday honey panna cotta or a merry apple walnut cheesecake. Apart from eggnog and mulled wine, Daysie's Christmas Day cocktails include a Merry Berry Bliss of white rum and homemade raspberry syrup, and Santa's Sip with gin, homemade spices and syrups, lime juice and egg.

From 12 noon to 12.30am, for reservations call 9180 4725 0000.

**Buffet bonanza**
If you think a traditional Christmas meal with all the trimmings is a tad too much to stomach and perhaps even a bit overhyped, you can always fall back on The Black Pearl's buffet spread, where you can pick and choose what suits you best. Their curated Christmas special menu includes unlimited vegetarian and non-vegetarian options with mocktails for children and wine for adults. The bar menu also includes winter specials and season-themed tipples. Price start from ₹700 for children (6-12 yrs), unlimited vegetarian buffet with a glass of wine ₹1299, unlimited non-vegetarian buffet with a glass of wine ₹1399. For reservations call 9880434555.

**Doing Rudolph proud**
SuzyQ is leaving no stone unturned to ensure this Christmas is a memorable one. Their menu for the day starts with smoked aubergine and feta cream or wild mushroom cannelloni or triple cheese prawns and sea shell pasta, before moving on to grilled fish and mustard baked cauliflower, confit turkey leg in brown mushroom sauce or the basil-chilli pork chops, accompanied by gochujang belly and a chorizo crostini, among other delicious options.

End the meal on a sweet note with vanilla cream mille-feuille a classic creamy vanilla pastry paired with a rum-soaked raisin brownie or a raspberry Santa nutty brittle layered with coconut mousse and served with dragon fruit ice-cream.

Hot buttered rum and Rudolph's Remedy – a Christmas cocktail of white rum, cherry filling and vanilla are to be had for the sipping along with other festive beverages.

From 12 noon to 12.30am. Call 080 4725 00 88 for reservations.

Your Christmas present awaits at Fox in the Field – a pint of beer or mulled wine on the house! Follow it up with a lavish spread which includes a mix of Continental, Indian and Asian cuisines. Dishes such as duck in spiced plum sauce and roast turkey with caramelised onion sauce, couscous cheese galouti and mutton laal maas, kung napling pao and chilly basil noodles are just a sampling of their Christmas spread.

The buffet at Fox in the Field includes Christmas special desserts, clay pot cold rice kheer, shahi tukda and more as a fitting end to your meal.

Prices begin from ₹1499. Christmas lunch will be served from 12pm-3.30pm. Call 91-8970707999, 91-8971433379 for details

**Three or five**
This Christmas Lazy Suzy is gifting diners the choice of a five-course menu or a three-course one. While their five-course special comprises starters and dishes such as port wine-infused chicken liver pâté, grilled prawn rechade and a traditional roast turkey with pistachio and bread stuffing, accompanied by buttered vegetables and orange-glazed sweet potato, the three-course option includes a soup or salad, mains and dessert.

Lazy Suzy's dessert platter includes the traditional pudding toast with vanilla ice cream and other sweet treats.

Their five-course menu costs ₹1950+ GST, while the three-course menu costs ₹1750+ GST. Available for lunch and dinner from 12.15pm and 7.30pm. Call 8073032246 or 08025272737 for bookings.

**Mirror to society** Scenes from 'The Maze'. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

# Battling for right over their bodies

In a fusion of text, movement, poetry, music, theatre and technology, Surabhi Bharadwaj, artistic director of Siddhi Creative, is set to unveil *The Maze* at Bangalore International Centre on December 26, from 7pm to 8pm. The devised creation aims to challenge societal norms surrounding beauty, femininity, motherhood, and the deification of womanhood.

Inspired by Surabhi's personal journey and the experiences of women navigating patriarchy, the performance delves into the impact of rigid gender roles, inadequate support systems and unrealistic beauty standards. The performance sheds light on the detrimental effects of societal pressures on self-esteem, body image, and mental health, particularly during the post-partum period.

The issues depicted in *The Maze* are a reflection of the broader political climate in the United States, where legislation often seeks to control women's bodies and limit their autonomy over parenting choices.

Collaborating with accomplished performers, including movement artiste Veena Basavarajaiah, music composer Roopa Mahadevan and projection mapping artiste Shivaangi Ramesh, Surabhi aims to create a thought-provoking experience.

Veena, with an MA in South Asian Dance Studies, serves as the director, while Roopa, a San Francisco-based Indian classical vocalist, will lend her voice.

Shivaangi, a skilled projection mapping artist, will make the performance livelier with interactive 3D visuals.

*The Maze* promises to be an exploration of personal experiences, societal expectations, and the political landscape, offering the audience a perspective on the challenges faced by women.

*Admission is free. RSVP recommended. More information at bangalore internationalcentre.org*

# A slow but steady climb up the ladder

**Shilpa Anandraj**

Archana Kottige ventured into the Kannada film industry in 2018 and is slowly, but steadily making her mark. Born and brought up in Bengaluru, she comes from a family that stressed on the importance of academics. Archana was studying to become a chartered accountant when she says she got fed up with numbers.

"I did complete my BCom and it was during this time that I got distracted. I would read about film auditions on virtual platforms and out of curiosity, attend those auditions and then return to my studies."

The actor, an alumni of Jain College, VV Puram and Christ University says, "Entering films was no easy feat for me. I did not have any connections and my parents were wary of me joining films. Women in cinema are usually seen as glamourous props. I worked with a local theatre group and my parents got to see me act on stage. That gave them the confidence that I might succeed as an actor and they decided to encourage me."

Archana completed her education and her parents also set out certain rules for her cinematic entry.

**Power packed** Archana Kottige, in a still from *Elra Kaaleliyatte Kaala* with Chandan Shetty. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Since then, Archana has done cameos in films including *Vasthu nan Prakara*, was cast as a leading lady in *Dear Sathya*, and came to her own in her latest release, *Hostel Hudugaru Bekagiddare*.

When she auditioned for *Hostel...* Archana identified with Smitha, one of the characters. "I found physical similarities with my on-screen character. For instance, the character has a mole on one of her knees, and so do I." After the audition, Archana was told, all the characters had been cast. "Later in the evening, I was added to the WhatsApp group, where the story and characters unfolded and after that, there was no looking back".

Having no idea of the filmmaking process, Archana decided to take a crash course in digital filmmaking at the LV Prasad Film and TV Academy, while parallely auditioning for every casting call she heard about. "When I faced the camera, I realised that filmmaking was so different from what I had studied theoretically. It took me a while to understand how it works in the real world. I soon got to understand the process and got into the groove."

Acting a scene in a room and on location is very different, Archana says. "One gets used to it over time, though initially, I was tongue-tied."

Archana has acted in films such as *Dear Sathya*, *Yellow Gangs*, *Vijayanand*, and *Hondisi Bareyiri*. In *Hondisi ...*, she shares the screen with Naveen Shankara and Archana Jois. The actor's next major release, *Elra Kaaleliyatte Kaala,* is directed by Sujay Shastry, who also acts in the film. Chandan Shetty, Thara and Mandya Ramesh also star in the comedy.

# 2 Kerala Ministers quit for Cabinet reshuffle

LDF convener Jayarajan says the second Pinarayi Vijayan govt. had promised Cabinet berths to four allies with one MLA each in the Assembly on a two-and-a-half-year sharing-term basis; Antony Raju and Ahammad Devarkovil submit their resignations; new Ministers to take oath on December 29

**The Hindu Bureau**
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Even before the dust from the Kerala government's 36-day political odyssey from the halls of power in the Secretariat to town halls in 140 legislative Assembly constituencies ('Navakerala Sadas') barely settled, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) State committee engineered a major reshuffle in the Pinarayi Vijayan Cabinet.

LDF convener E.P. Jayarajan, who chaired the State committee meeting on Sunday, told pressperssons that the second Pinarayi Vijayan government, which came to power in 2021, had promised Cabinet berths to four allies with an MLA each in the Assembly on a two-and-a-half-year sharing-term basis ending in November.

**Portfolios to be decided**

As per the understanding, Transport Minister Antony Raju of the Democratic Kerala Congress would quit office in favour of Kerala Congress(B) leader K.B. Ganesh Kumar.

Similarly, Kadannappally Ramachandran of the Congress(S) would replace Ahammad Devarkovil of the Indian National League.

However, the 'Navakerala Sadas' had delayed the decision by a month.

Kadannappally Ramachandran (left) and K.B. Ganesh Kumar

Mr. Jayarajan said the LDF had stayed the course. Mr. Raju and Mr. Devarkovil submitted their resignations to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. The new Ministers, Mr. Ganesh Kumar and Mr. Ramachandran, would take their oath of office on December 29.

Mr. Vijayan would decide on their portfolios.

Mr. Jayarajan said the LDF executed the reshuffle without heartburn or risk to the ruling front's unity and cohesion. "Mr. Raju and Mr. Devarkovil had served the people well. The new entrants would uphold their legacy," Mr. Jayarajan said.

## Congress unrelenting

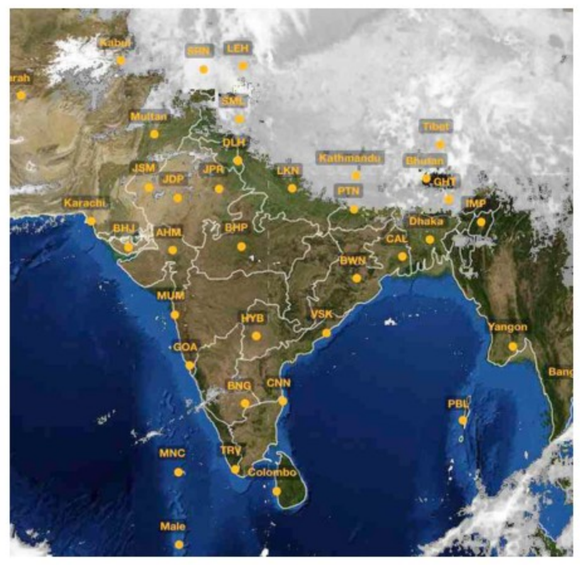
**The Hindu Bureau**
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress has vowed to keep up pressure on the government after a stormy season of Opposition protests against the 'Navakerala Sadas', the Cabinet's public outreach programme.

The party also plans to boycott the induction of Kerala Congress (B) leader K.B. Ganesh Kumar, into the Cabinet. He had become anathema to the party after the CBI named him a conspirator in the alleged plot against former CM Oommen Chandy in the solar scam case.

## WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday




TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

**Forecast for Monday:** Dense to very dense fog very likely in isolated pockets over Punjab, Haryana and East Uttar Pradesh; Dense fog in isolated pockets over West Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. Squally Weather with wind speed 40-45 kmph gusting to 55 kmph very likely to prevail over South Andaman Sea.

| CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN | CITY | RAIN | MAX | MIN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agartala | — | 28.6 | 15.8 | Kozhikode | — | 34.4 | 24.4 |
| Ahmedabad | — | 28.8 | 17.4 | Kurnool | — | 39.9 | 17.5 |
| Aizawl | — | 27.5 | 16.8 | Lucknow | — | 26.0 | 10.8 |
| Allahabad | — | 27.2 | 11.6 | Madurai | — | 31.2 | 21.6 |
| Bengaluru | — | 30.0 | 15.0 | Mangaluru | — | 31.8 | 21.6 |
| Bhopal | — | 29.3 | 12.6 | Mumbai | — | 32.6 | 21.8 |
| Bhubaneswar | — | 27.4 | 16.0 | Mysuru | — | 29.9 | — |
| Chandigarh | — | 24.8 | 8.1 | New Delhi | — | 24.2 | 9.8 |
| Chennai | — | 29.3 | 22.9 | Patna | — | — | — |
| Coimbatore | — | 31.0 | 18.3 | Port Blair | — | 30.6 | 26.3 |
| Dehradun | — | 24.8 | 7.4 | Puducherry | — | 30.8 | 21.9 |
| Gangtok | — | 15.9 | 7.9 | Pune | — | 31.8 | 15.7 |
| Goa | — | 34.0 | 20.8 | Raipur | — | 27.6 | 13.8 |
| Guwahati | — | 27.8 | 12.2 | Ranchi | — | 25.3 | 11.6 |
| Hubballi | — | 32.0 | 16.0 | Shillong | — | 16.6 | 8.5 |
| Hyderabad | — | 28.4 | 15.1 | Shimla | — | 16.7 | 7.6 |
| Imphal | — | 22.7 | 11.5 | Srinagar | — | 8.5 | -2.1 |
| Jaipur | — | 24.0 | 12.4 | Thiruvananthapuram | — | 34.8 | 22.7 |
| Kochi | — | 31.6 | 24.8 | Tiruchi | — | 29.7 | 21.6 |
| Kohima | — | 18.0 | 6.8 | Vijayawada | — | 29.4 | 19.8 |
| Kolkata | — | 25.1 | 17.5 | Visakhapatnam | — | 28.1 | 21.0 |

*(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)*

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

| CITIES | $SO_2$ | $NO_2$ | CO | PM2.5 | PM10 | CODE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ahmedabad | 1 | 2 | 30 | 252 | 169 | |
| Bengaluru | 15 | 12 | 17 | 163 | 133 | |
| Chennai | 3 | 8 | 41 | 175 | 135 | |
| Delhi | 39 | 60 | 53 | 433 | 480 | |
| Hyderabad | 7 | 24 | 68 | 267 | — | |
| Kolkata | 9 | 6 | 51 | 218 | 144 | |
| Lucknow | 12 | 57 | 74 | 350 | 279 | |
| Mumbai | 18 | — | 18 | 265 | 183 | |
| Pune | — | 23 | 31 | 281 | 167 | |
| Visakhapatnam | 13 | 67 | 51 | 218 | 156 | |

**Yesterday**

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Shadipur, Delhi recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 480 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Jayanagar 5th Block, Bengaluru recorded a healthy AQI score of 163.

**Air Quality Code:** Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

**$SO_2$:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

**$NO_2$:** Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

**CO:** Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

**PM2.5 & PM10:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

# Three from Yadgir among five killed in road accident in Telangana

**The Hindu Bureau**
YADGIR

As many as five people, three from the State and two from Maharashtra, were killed and two were injured in a road accident in Telangana on Sunday.

Among the five people killed, three were from Yadgir district. They all died on the spot near Jaklair village in Makthal taluk of Narayanpet district of Telangana, bordering Yadgir district. According to sources, they were killed when two cars collided. The cause for the accident is yet to be ascertained. The victims have been identified as Moulali, Khaleel and Basamma, all from Saidapur village in Yadgir district, and Prabheetha and Ashmitha, both from Maharashtra.

The Makthal Police rushed to the spot and shifted the injured to the Makthal Taluk Hospital.

# A.P. High Court directs registry to place CM's camp office case before Chief Justice

**The Hindu Bureau**
VIJAYAWADA

Justice Nimmagadda Venkateswarlu of the Andhra Pradesh High Court has directed the registry to place the matter of provision of camp office for Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and accommodation for senior government officials in Visakhapatnam during their visits, before the Chief Justice for a decision whether or not to tag it with the pending three capitals cases.

Justice Venkateswarlu was dealing with a writ petition filed by Amaravati

Setting up CM's camp in Vizag is part of government's attempt to shift capital, says petition.

Parirakshana Samithi managing trustee Gadde Tirupathi Rao and two others, whose contention is that setting up the CM's camp office and transit accommodation for the officers is a part of the government's attempt to shift the capital from Amaravati to the executive capital in Visakhapatnam in violation of the judgment of a Full Bench of the High Court in the 'three capitals' case, which was challenged by the State government in the Supreme Court.

The petitioners insisted that the underlying objective was to shift the 'seat of governance' to Visakhapatnam.

The State has been arguing that apart from conducting review meetings, the Chief Minister and senior functionaries of the government have to undertake field visits and make night halts. Therefore, providing them transit accommodation should not be construed as shifting the offices from the Secretariat in Amaravati.

In his order, Justice Venkateswarlu restrained the State from shifting or relocating the offices or departments from the Secretariat in Amaravati to Visakhapatnam pursuant to G.O.Rt.No. 2283 till the matter is heard by an appropriate Bench, to avoid unnecessary expenditure thereof and on maintaining offices both in Amaravati and Visakhapatnam.

THE HINDU

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**Nahla Nainar**

## An upbeat outlook

2023 was a tumultuous year for students who were looking to go abroad for higher studies. The coming year may be better, say experts

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Tectonic shifts in diplomatic ties between countries and tightening of immigration rules have not really taken the shine off overseas education, at least among Indian students. Surviving the turmoil created by the COVID-19 closures, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the diplomatic stand-off with Canada, they still find a foreign degree worth it.

According to ICEF Monitor, the number of Indian students enrolled in studies abroad is expected to increase to two million by 2025, from over a million in 2019, as per University Living's survey *Beyond Beds and Boundaries: Indian Student Mobility Report 2023*. It also found that direct spending on overseas education by Indian students amounted to $47 billion for 2022, which is expected to rise to as high as $70 billion by 2025. Cashing in on this market, study-abroad consultants have introduced AI and digitisation, and made their processes more transparent.

"Indian students from tier-2 and tier-3 cities now have access to consultants, who advise learners on the process of developing a unique personal brand when applying to universities across the globe. Consultants also help students apply for financial aid and scholarships, leading to an increasing number of Indian students applying abroad," says Kunal Mehra, managing director and CEO, Crimson Education India.

**Changing rules**

India's overseas education market is mostly geared towards Canada, Australia, the U.S. and the U.K. This year, these countries changed their rules in a bid to streamline the application process. The U.S. cracked down on fraudulent universities with stringent checks. The waiting time for its student visas in India ranges from 100-325 days, depending on the place of application.

From January 2024, the U.K. will issue dependents' visa only for those international students pursuing a PG degree, leading to a last-minute visa rush among this year's undergraduates. Canada's diplomatic row with India has spurred many students to defer their applications from January to September. In May this year, leading Australian universities announced a ban on students from Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir due to a rise in fraudulent applications from these states.

"Despite the changes, we receive over 30-40 queries a day," says Mamta Shekhawat, founder, Gradding, an overseas study platform. "Current Indian students are so well-equipped that, sometimes, we are surprised to see those who have still not attempted their board exams being quite certain about what they want to do after school, and which university abroad would be the best choice for them."

The churn, though, is constant. "The ongoing Indo-Canadian diplomatic row has negatively impacted our business. We have seen a 30% reduction in our India business mainly because of the slow visa processing. The Canadian institutions are open to taking Indian students, but the application and visa processing has slowed down," says Raghwa Gopal, CEO of Canada-based global education consultancy M Square Media.

**Popular subjects**

Undergraduate degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths (STEM) streams and Postgraduate Management courses have a steady following among Indian students.

"I chose to do a 12-month Master's in Management abroad after graduating in Computer Science and working for three years in India because it offered a way out of the CAT drill back home," says Sanjana, from Chennai, who is studying in Maastricht School of Management, the Netherlands. While foreign degrees add an edge to job prospects in India, they also help students step out of their comfort zones and broaden their horizons at their own pace, she adds.

Many countries are tying up with institutions across borders to cater to the shortages in their job market. "Due to the shortage of doctors, nurses and other support staff in Canada, Caribbean institutes have linked up with Canadian ones to train students who will be employed exclusively in Canada. This is a good pathway for medical aspirants from anywhere in the world, hoping to work here," says Gopal of M Square Media.

Most of the growth at the undergraduate level, for the next year, seems to be focused on AI, Blockchain, Cyber Security and Data Science even though the programmes are still evolving, he says.

**Increasing transparency**

For long, student visas have been seen as a backdoor channel for illegal immigration, a phenomenon that consultancies are combating with the help of AI and digitisation. "There will always be some bad apples, but the majority go there for the right reasons," says Gopal.

"We are using AI to detect fake documents. A lot of the mundane work that we need multiple staff for can be done much faster and better by AI. On the validation side, it helps us ensure that documents and information provided by the students is correct," he adds.

At Gradding, software impedes potential fraud at every step. "We have quality control teams to check applicants' financial fitness. The applicant, too, can see the progress of their documents through the channels. Transparency is key to the sector's success," says Shekhawat.

The outlook is upbeat for 2024. "Elite universities across the world are experiencing paradigm shifts with the digitisation of SAT and introduction of blended study programmes. With a burgeoning middle class in Asian nations such as India, more families are expected to explore international education options for their children," says Mehra.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

**Corteva Agriscience Scholarship**
An initiative by Corteva Agriscience India Pvt. Ltd. to provide financial assistance to meritorious students.
**Eligibility:** Open to girls studying in a government college in any year of a MBA/ M.Sc./ M.Tech. or Ph.D courses in streams such as Home Science, Biotechnology, Entomology, Breeding, and so on, recognised by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). Annual family income must be ₹6 lakhs or less. Children of employees of Corteva and Buddy4Study are not eligible.
**Rewards:** Up to ₹50,000
**Application:** Online
**Deadline:** December 30
www.b4s.in/edge/CASP1

**NSP Central Sector Scheme**
A programme for students from economically weaker sections offered by the Ministry of Education and administered through the National Scholarship Portal (NSP).
**Eligibility:** Open to students who have scored above the 80th percentile in their respective streams in Class 12 and are pursuing a UG/ PG degree in a professional field such as Medicine or Engineering at a recognised institution. Annual family income must be less than ₹4.5 lakhs.
**Rewards:** Up to ₹20,000 per annum
**Application:** Online
**Deadline:** December 31
www.b4s.in/edge/CSSS1

**NSP Financial Assistance for Education**
An initiative of the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.
**Eligibility:** Open to children of *beedi*, iron, manganese and chrome ore mines, limestone and dolomite mines, and cine workers, with at least six months of service. Students must be enrolled in a regular course of General or Technical education, and have passed the last qualifying exam in the first attempt.
**Rewards:** Up to ₹25,000 per annum
**Application:** Online
**Deadline:** December 31
www.b4s.in/edge/MLE8

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

## Another opportunity

### The Wrestling Federation of India needs a complete overhaul

The Union Sports Ministry suspending the newly elected Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) on Sunday marks yet another twist in the nearly year-long saga afflicting Indian wrestling. In January 2023, Olympic medallists Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia, and World Championship medallist Vinesh Phogat, had accused the then WFI President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh and the coaches of the Federation of sexual harassment. The Bharatiya Janata Party parliamentarian was subsequently forced to relinquish control and was charged by the Delhi police for offences including stalking and harassment. But last Thursday, his long-term loyalist, Sanjay Singh, was appointed the new president. Not only did Singh and his fellow Brij Bhushan confidants win 13 of 15 posts to which polls were held, not a single woman was chosen. The sight of Singh standing beside a heavily garlanded Brij Bhushan outside the latter's residence – which also doubled up as the WFI office – and the duo flashing the victory sign was enough indication of where the control lay. Such was the disappointment among the wrestlers that a tearful Sakshi announced her retirement while Vinesh warned that no woman will find wrestling safe in the current set-up. On Friday, Bajrang decided to return his Padma Shri award in protest.

Perhaps, it is this embarrassing turn of events that forced the government to finally act. The Ministry has also cited hasty and arbitrary decision-making on Singh's part, wherein he announced the revival of tournaments without taking into confidence the Secretary General (Prem Chand Lochab) as mandated by the WFI constitution. Lochab is one of two WFI office-bearers not considered close to Brij Bhushan. Another reason was the running of Federation affairs from "the premises controlled by former office-bearers, also the alleged premises wherein sexual harassment of players has been alleged". In a nutshell, the mess has laid bare everything that plagues sports administration in India. Even as the nation is diversifying its sporting excellence, the bureaucracy that runs sport still carries the unwelcome legacy of patronage politics. It also does not help that prominent athletes occupying positions of power are mostly deferential to the political masters who helped in their ascent. In the wrestlers' case, the Indian Olympic Association led by the legendary P.T. Usha dithered in its initial response and the athletes' commission comprising iconic sportspersons was tongue-tied. Such was Brij Bhushan's clout that a first information report was registered only after the intervention of the Chief Justice of India. There is still room to wipe the slate clean and usher in reforms. The authorities should go the whole hog.

## Opportune pause

### Uncertainty over the Science Congress's schedule is a chance to evaluate it

The Indian Science Congress (ISC) is an annual event where a slice of the country's scientific community gathers to present and discuss research and communicate science. It has curried prestige by having each edition inaugurated by the Prime Minister and, often, a Nobel Laureate or two in attendance. But in the past few years, the ISC's reputation has been in tatters after it offered itself as a platform for a few members of the scientific community to advance pseudoscientific claims, particularly those that dovetailed to hyper-nationalist narratives in other spheres. Now, the ISC's 109th edition, originally to be held in Lucknow University in 2024, has been cast in doubt after the University pulled out citing an ongoing dispute between the Department of Science and Technology (DST), a significant source of funds for the event, and the ISC Association, the autonomous body under the DST that organises it. The association then picked Lovely Professional University in Jalandhar to host it but the decision drew the DST's ire, including an unspecific allegation of "financial irregularities" on the association's part. Then Lovely pulled out as well even as the association went to court against the DST citing government interference. The association has also published a notice seeking the interest of other universities to host the 2024 event and has constituted a committee to find a new venue.

This pause in the ISC's schedule is an opportunity to consider the relevance of the ISC. Of course, some reputed scientists have called the post-2014 event a "circus" that is deleterious to the cause of science in India, so the uncertainty may not bother them. But the ISC also hosts thousands of school and college students every year as well as some talks by researchers that contribute to learning and awareness. This is not as straightforward as a plea to throw away only the bathwater, not the baby. The ISC is itself flawed, with its oracular choice of speakers, disjointed agenda, and hectic schedule not facilitating meaningful engagement. Since 2015, the Indian government has also been rooting for the India International Science Festival, an event put together by the Ministries of Science and Technology and of Earth Sciences, the Departments of Space and of Atomic Energy, and Vijnana Bharati, an outfit connected to the Sangh Parivar. In effect, what the ISC should become is an independent, more frequent, and more coherent event after a critical appraisal of what the national scientific community, including its members in the private sector, offers to bring to the table. Everything else – including the presence of political leaders and Nobel Laureates – is ornamental.

# *India's jobs crisis, the macroeconomic reasons*

**Zico Dasgupta**

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**Amit Basole**

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There are many indications everywhere that India continues to be going through a jobs crisis. Official data sources as well as many on-the-ground reports point to this fact. What are the macroeconomic reasons for this crisis?

**The symptoms of low labour demand**

At the outset, it is useful to distinguish the two types of employment that prevail in an economy such as India. The first is wage employment which is a result of labour demanded by employers in their pursuit of profits. The second is self-employment where labour supply and labour demand are identical, i.e., the worker employs herself. A further useful distinction can also be made between wage labour and jobs. The first includes all forms of labour done for an employer including daily wage work at one extreme and highly paid corporate jobs at the other. But, jobs generally refer to relatively better paid regular wage or salaried employment. In other words, all jobs are wage labour, but all wage labour cannot be called jobs. When we speak of a jobs problem, we are speaking of inadequate labour demand particularly for regular wage work.

The Indian economy has historically been characterised by the presence of both open unemployment (out of work job-seekers) as well as high levels of informal employment consisting of the self-employed as well as casual wage workers. The last is also called "disguised unemployment" because, being similar to open unemployment, it also indicates a lack of adequate employment opportunities in the formal sector.

This lack of opportunities is reflected by a more or less stagnant employment growth rate of salaried workers in the non-agricultural sector in the last four decades. What explains such constraints in the labour demand of formal sector?

The labour demand in the formal non-agricultural sector is determined by two distinct factors. First, since firms in the formal sector hire workers to produce output for profit, labour demand depends on the amount of output that firms are able to sell. Under any given level of technological development, labour demand in the formal sector rises when demand for output rises. Second, labour demand depends on the state of technology that dictates the number of workers that firms need to hire to produce one unit of output. Introduction of labour-saving technologies enables firms to produce the same amount of output by hiring a lower number of workers.

Since economic policy is generally framed in terms of output growth (think of GDP or value-added), rather than the level of output, let us examine this argument in terms of growth rates. Employment growth rate is determined by the relative strength of two factors – the output growth rate and the labour productivity growth rate (growth rate of output per worker). If labour productivity growth rate does not change, higher output growth rate increases employment growth rate. In other words, policies that promote higher economic growth would also achieve higher employment growth. On the other hand, if labour productivity growth rate rises, employment growth rate falls for a given output growth rate.

In India, the employment growth rate of the formal and non-agricultural sector remained unresponsive despite a significant rise in the GDP growth rate and the value added growth rate during the 2000s as compared to the decade of the 1980s and 1990s. The lack of responsiveness of employment growth rate to changes in output growth rate reflects a phenomenon of jobless growth. It indicates a strong connection between labour productivity growth rate and output growth rate. Why should this be the case?

**Jobless growth with Indian characteristics**

As an economy grows, it is generally seen that it also becomes more productive. That is, in the process of producing a greater amount of total output, firms become capable of producing more output per worker. This happens because of what economists call "economies of scale". As firms produce more output, they find it easier to adopt labour-saving technologies. But the extent to which labour-saving technologies are introduced depends on the bargaining power of labour.

We can make a distinction between two types of jobless growth regimes based on the tightness of the connection between output growth and labour productivity growth.

In the first case, the responsiveness of labour productivity growth rate to output growth rate is weak. The possibility of jobless growth in this case emerges exclusively on account of automation and the introduction of labour-saving technology. But employment growth rate in such regimes would necessarily increase if output growth rate happens to increase. Under weak responsiveness of labour productivity, the positive effect of GDP growth rate on employment would dominate over the adverse effect of labour-saving technologies. Here, the solution to the jobs crisis is just more rapid economic growth.

In the second case, which happens to be the Indian one, the responsiveness of labour productivity growth rate to output growth rate is high. Here, the positive effect of output growth rate on employment fails to counteract the adverse effect of labour-saving technologies. Employment growth rate in such regimes cannot be increased simply by increasing GDP growth rate. The extent to which labour productivity growth rate responds to output growth rate is reflected by what is termed as the Kaldor-Verdoorn coefficient. In a recent working paper (by us), we show that India's non-agricultural sector is characterised by a higher than average Kaldor-Verdoorn coefficient, as compared to other developing countries. It is this distinct form of jobless growth regime in India that makes India's macroeconomic policy challenge qualitatively different from other countries.

**Macroeconomic policy framework**

The central contribution of the Keynesian revolution in macroeconomics was to highlight the role of aggregate demand as the binding constraint on employment. Fiscal policy was perceived to increase labour demand by stimulating output. The developing countries that inherited a dual economy structure during their independence, confronted additional constraints on output. The Mahalanobis strategy identified the availability of capital goods as the binding constraint on output and employment, putting forward the policy for heavy industrialisation. The structuralist theories based on the experiences of developing countries highlighted the possibility of agrarian constraint and the balance of payment constraints. Both these constraints led to key policy debates in India, particularly during the decade of the 1970s and early 1990s.

Nonetheless, what remained common to all these different frameworks was the presumption that increasing the output growth rate in the non-agricultural sector would be a sufficient condition for increasing the employment growth rate in the formal sector.

But the evidence suggests that the employment challenge can no longer be met only through more rapid GDP growth. Rather, a separate policy focus is needed on employment in addition to the focus on GDP growth.

Such employment policies will need both demand side and supply side components. For example, to the extent firms in India find it easier to automate due to a lack of adequate skilled labour, increasing the quality of the workforce through better public provisioning of education and health care, as well as bridging the skills gap, are important. On the demand side, direct public job creation will be needed.

Financing such expenditures while maintaining debt-stability requires the reorienting of the current macroeconomic framework in a significant way, including increasing the direct tax to GDP ratio by reducing exemptions and improving compliance, and a more imaginative use of macro-policy to pursue a constructive employment agenda.

The employment challenge can no longer be met only through more rapid GDP growth; a separate policy focus is needed on employment

# *The evolving role of the Colombo Security Conclave*

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In early December, India's National Security Adviser (NSA), Ajit Doval, took part in the sixth NSA meeting of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC). The meeting reviewed the developments and progress made by the CSC in the last year and agreed upon a road map for the year 2024 to promote a safe, secure, and stable Indian Ocean. The meeting also included member-states, Mauritius and Sri Lanka, and observer-states, Bangladesh and Seychelles. The Maldives, now under a new dispensation, was the only member-state that was absent, underscoring the impact of domestic politics over regional collaboration. It is imperative for India to continue pushing for a proactive CSC to address the challenges in the Indian Ocean.

**Changing dynamics**

The CSC underscores the evolving dynamics of the Indian Ocean. The organisation came into its own in 2011, with Sri Lanka joining India and the Maldives for a trilateral maritime security grouping but came to a standstill after 2014 due to rising tensions between India and the Maldives. In 2020, India not only pushed for the revival and institutionalisation of the organisation but also expressed interest in expanding the CSC to Mauritius, the Seychelles, and Bangladesh. The push for the CSC demonstrates India's evolving strategic vision for the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean is at the heart of an evolving multipolar world today, with extra-regional powers competing to make inroads in the region. This competition will further increase as the Indo-Pacific's importance grows.

For India, a traditional power in the region, the CSC offers an opportunity to strengthen its leadership and security architecture. Since its independence, India has played an increasing role in promoting security in the Indian Ocean. The lack of capacity of island nations to secure the seas and counter transnational threats has continued to motivate India to assist them in defence and security-related capacity building, infrastructure development, and equipment provision. India has also played a vital role as the first responder in the region, be it to avert coups or to offer humanitarian and economic assistance during COVID-19 and multi-faceted crises. The CSC offers India an opportunity to institutionalise its role, shape the regional security architecture, and better address the existing and emerging threats.

**A revival that is linked to the China factor**

China is another crucial reason for the revival of CSC. Since the early 2000s, Beijing has invested substantively in the Indian Ocean with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects, helping it access the Indian Ocean. Beijing's outreach to the Indian Ocean is to control the crucial sea lines of communication and trade and to limit India's influence and presence. Today, China is not only strengthening its naval capabilities; it also maintains strong defence relationships with states in the Indian Ocean region and also conducts regular maritime exercises in the Ocean. It has established a base in Djibouti and controls Sri Lanka's Hambantota port. It continues to use scientific ships to map the Indian Ocean bed. Finally, it also wants to counter the prevailing security architecture in the Indian Ocean by institutionalising its presence through platforms such as the Indian Ocean Region Forum on Development Cooperation.

Despite expressing concerns about some of these developments, India realises that many regional countries do not necessarily consider China a threat. They are also too dependent on China to have an overt anti-China policy. As a result, the CSC has focused on five pillars – maritime security and safety; countering terrorism and radicalisation; trafficking and transnational crime; cyber-security and protecting critical infrastructure, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. It is with these sectors of cooperation that India hopes to better understand and respond to threats from the Indian Ocean and continue being a preferred partner for the Indian Ocean states.

This strategic accommodation and flexibility is, in fact, contributing to the security of the Indian Ocean. Since 2021, the CSC has investigated terrorism and terror financing, narcotics trafficking, cybercrime and security, marine pollution, maritime law, and coastal security. In 2022, for the first time, the organisation held a conference of oceanographers and hydrographers and another conference on coastal security. The next iterations of these conferences are scheduled for 2024. Joint working groups have already been established, or are being finalised, on terrorism, cyber-security, humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HADR), trafficking and transnational organised crimes. Apart from regular NSA and Deputy NSA meetings, the countries are collaborating on capacity-building in sectors such as counter-terrorism, police, law enforcement, and cyber-security.

**The influence of politics**

Yet, the CSC, as a young institution, remains vulnerable to domestic political changes in its member-states. The Maldives's absence from the recent meeting is an example of this vulnerability. Two reasons would have likely contributed to its decision: first, to prefer a close relationship with China, or second, to live up to the expectations of the nationalist campaign that have pledged to distance the Maldives from India on defence cooperation. But, this use of nationalist and pro-China cards is not exclusive to the Maldives. All the members of the CSC are democracies, and these countries play and will continue to use both the cards for their domestic and external benefits as the Indo-Pacific region grows in prominence. For New Delhi, whose ambitions, responsibilities, and threats have increased significantly in the last decade, the CSC will remain an important instrument to help it consolidate its regional leadership.

All the members of the CSC, which are democracies, will continue to play their cards based on domestic and external benefits

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Flood aid, verbal exchange**

There seems to be no end to the controversy a prominent Minister in Tamil Nadu creates with his verbal utterances, this time over financial aid for the State after the extensive flooding. His use of a particular word was crude, and is unacceptable, which has been made worse by his asking whether the word used was an uncivil term/noun. As a budding politician, he must learn to be polite and decent in his speech.

**A.P. Thiruvadi,**
Chennai

The way the Union Minister concerned conducted herself in the media meet to discuss aid for Tamil Nadu was shocking. Her remarks were caustic and aggressive. One only hopes that the sufferings of the people in south Tamil Nadu are not lost sight of.

**Tharcius S. Fernando,**
Chennai

**The window seat**

The article, "Window wars" (Open Page, December 24), made me recollect an experience while travelling from Chennai to Bangalore city (on duty) by the Brindavan Express (a/c coach) some years ago. The seating was such that there were three seats on one side and two seats on the other, making it a total of 10 seats in a bay, with four window seats. Three window seats were already occupied. Then came a person who seemed to be politically influential, who occupied the remaining window seat. Before departure, a couple sat down on the allotted seats, one next to the politician and the other on the other side. Since they wanted to sit together, they requested the politically influential person to move, which he stoutly refused to do. When I attempted to help them, he bawled at me too. Some people are crazy about their window seats in trains.

**D. Sethuraman,**
Chennai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address.

# Unpacking the first ever COP 'Health Day'

**Shweta Narayan**

is the International Climate and Health Campaigner with Health Care Without Harm

The 28th UN Climate Change Conference (COP28), hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) at Dubai, was held in a year when the planet is facing unprecedented challenges. From it being the hottest year on record to wildfires that have devoured communities and floods that have wiped away cities, the evidence of the current crisis is crystal clear.

The climate crisis is a public health crisis. Severe temperatures, heat stress, excessive rainfall and floods, an increase in water- and vector-borne diseases, and more frequent extreme weather events are all evidence of this existential threat to our health security. That is why the World Health Organization (WHO) declared "Climate change as the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century". Marginalised communities are on the front lines of the worst impacts of the changing climate. According to a World Bank estimate, "Climate change could drag more than 100 million people back into extreme poverty by 2030". Much of this reversal would be due to the "negative impacts on health". The climate risk index shows that eight out of the 10 countries most impacted by extreme weather events are the low- and middle-income countries.

**A good global response**

On December 3, the inaugural Health Day at COP28 highlighted the vital link between climate and health, underscoring that combating climate change is integral to advancing global health. The context to the day and the urgency to address the root cause of climate crisis – fossil fuel use – was set in early November with health leaders representing more than 46 million health professionals globally issuing an open letter calling on the COP28 Presidency and world governments to "commit to an accelerated, just and equitable phase-out of fossil fuels as the decisive path to health for all". Over 1,900 health professionals at this year's COP propelled the momentum to prioritise human health and well-being in climate decisions, taking centre stage.

Events and activities elevated a focus on people's health for the first time at a COP like never before. Most notable ones were the COP28 UAE Declaration on Climate and Health that "signifies a global commitment to address climate-related health impacts, emphasizing the imperative for governments to fortify healthcare systems". The declaration is now supported by 143 countries (to date). The COP28 Presidency, WHO, the UAE Ministry of Health and Prevention, and a group of champion countries also hosted the first-ever climate-health ministerial, which brought together nearly 50 Ministers of Health and 110 high-level health ministerial staff. Ministers of health, environment, finance, and other related sectors set out a "roadmap and opportunities for action to address the rapidly growing burden of climate change on healthcare systems and capture the vast socio-economic benefits from better health and well-being through climate action".

**India's record**

It is noteworthy that India was not represented on the historic health day at COP28. Over the last two decades, India has witnessed a significant rise in extreme temperatures, heat stress events, cyclones, floods, droughts, and malnutrition. In 2019 it ranked seventh globally for the severe impact of climate change, as in the Global Climate Risk Index. According to 'India 2023: An assessment of extreme weather events' brought out by *Down To Earth* magazine and the Centre for Science and Environment, India has seen a disaster nearly every day in the first nine months of this year – from heat and cold waves, cyclones and lightning to heavy rain, floods, and landslides. These disasters have "claimed 2,923 human lives, affected 1.84 million hectares (ha) of crop area, destroyed over 80,563 houses and killed close to 92,519 livestock".

According to the Reserve Bank of India's most recent report, as much as 4.5% of the country's GDP could be jeopardised by 2030 due to the impact of extreme heat and humidity on labour hours, emphasising the economic risks associated with heat-related challenges alone. Not to miss India's notoriety on its record on rising air pollution that caused at least 1.6 million premature deaths in 2019. Major public health challenges, including malaria, malnutrition, and diarrhoea, further compound the situation. The projected increase in these incidents, aligned with weather-related disasters and their health ramifications, poses a significant threat to the already strained public health infrastructure in the country.

**Need for plans**

Placing health at the forefront of climate planning in India is not just a necessity but an imperative for several compelling reasons. Over 700 million individuals in India, representing a significant portion of the population residing in rural areas, rely directly on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and forests, as well as natural resources such as water, biodiversity, mangroves, coastal zones, and grasslands for their livelihoods. It is crucial to proactively formulate plans and policies that cater to their health needs.

Prioritising health in climate planning safeguards both immediate and long-term well-being in the face of climate change impacts. This focus enhances community resilience and disease mitigation, ensuring that populations can better cope with challenges and contribute to sustainable development. Integrating health into climate planning is not only economically prudent, reducing health-care costs and increasing productivity, but also strategically crucial for the overall effectiveness and sustainability of climate actions in India.

Integrating health into climate planning is not only economically prudent but also vital for the overall effectiveness and sustainability of climate actions in India

# Weighing in on a caste census

## Political parties have to fine-tune their strategies, keeping political gains in mind

STATE OF PLAY

**Biju Govind**
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Mainstream political parties in Kerala are grappling with the contentious issue of carrying out a caste survey in the State.

The Congress, which is leading the INDIA bloc, has championed having a nationwide caste census , positioning it as a countermeasure against the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government at the Centre. However, the results of the five Assembly elections suggest that the political dividends may not align with its expectations.

In contrast, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI-M]-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) government is reluctant, instead planning to build consensus on holding a Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) in Kerala. The party's hesitancy could stem from the Nair Service Society's assertion that a caste census is politically motivated and threatens societal harmony. The Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam, representing the Ezhava/Thiyya community, which initially was opposed to the idea, appears ambivalent now, recognising the potential impact on the CPI(M)'s crucial vote bank.

The SNDP Yogam leadership also feels that a caste census would subvert the Ezhava/Thiyya reservation in the Other Backward Class (OBC) and may prompt Muslims wanting a hike in the existing quota based on the representation against population criterion. The Syrian Church also opposes the objective, reflecting reservations within the Christian community.

Only a section of the Muslim community is demanding

a caste census, with the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) refraining from making an official demand. The IUML leadership strongly believes that such a clamour would consolidate the Hindu population along with the Christians against the party, as seen in the 2021 Assembly elections.

Except Muslims, communities across the spectrum are afraid that a caste census could expose their numerical strength, potentially altering political dynamics. The Muslim community stands out for its sustained growth, though its representation in government jobs remains low comparatively. The fear of exposure becomes a significant factor influencing the stance of various communities on the issue.

According to Census 2011 data, the population growth rate among Hindus and Christians was 2.23% and 1.38%, respectively; the Muslim population grew at 12.23% in the 2001-11 period. Unofficially, at present, the Muslim population is at around 27.5%, Ezhava/Thiyya at 23.5%, Christians at 17.5%, and Nairs at 13.5%.

Despite facing challenges in government job representation, Kerala's Muslims have experienced marked social and economic development, holding a large share of the State's assets and contributing significantly to education, health care, and foreign remittances. A caste census could certainly enhance their bureaucratic influence, and complement their existing power.

Irrespective of whether the LDF government goes in for a SECC or not, the CPI(M) leadership firmly feels that a pure caste-based census would not benefit the party and could even backfire.

The Congress central leadership sees it as an opportunity to regain support from the reserved communities, including the OBC such as Ezhava/Thiyya, as it navigates the challenge of losing its traditional vote bank among Nairs and Christians. This apart, it hopes to get the support of the Muslim community, which is part of the OBC. The combination is seen as electorally beneficial.

While not a dominant force in Kerala, the BJP advocates economic reservation with social indicators considered, which goes in tandem with its broader national agenda. The party's stance adds another layer to the complex caste census debate in the State.

In contemporary Kerala, transformed societal dynamics have led to reduced disparities among communities and the absence of widespread grievances related to caste discrimination. Influential figures within reserved communities are increasingly expressing the view that abolishing caste-based reservations is essential for the realisation of a casteless society. However, there is growing consensus that special attention should be directed towards the economically deprived communities of the Scheduled Castes and tribal people, ensuring that reservation policies prioritise their upliftment and inclusion.

But pitting caste and religion against another would be electorally damaging to both the Opposition Congress-led United Democratic Front and the CPI(M)-led LDF.

# Hamas war to mango pickle: What was 'Googled' in 2023

## Chandrayaan-3 mission made it to the top 10 list of global news events that trended in 2023

DATA POINT

**Godhashri Srinivasan**

In 2023, Chandrayaan-3 was the most searched term among news events in India, according to Google Trends. The lunar mission, which made India the first nation to touch down on the southern polar region of the moon, found a place in the global list of most searched news events too. It ranked ninth out of the top 10 news topics that trended globally in 2023. Chandrayaan-3 garnered widespread interest across all States in India, unlike other news events wherein searches were mostly limited.

The rest of the nine news events that trended in India this year include the Karnataka Assembly election results, actor-director Satish Kaushik's demise, the Union Budget, gangster-politician

Atiq Ahmed's murder, the ethnic conflict in Manipur and the train accident in Odisha which killed close to 300 people. International news events that made the list were the earthquake in Turkey, Hollywood actor Matthew Perry's death and the Israel-Hamas war.

Search interest about the Hamas war and the Manipur ethnic violence sustained for a longer period, given their drawn-out nature.

**Chart 1** shows the week these search terms trended. The darkest shade points to the week a particular news term achieved its peak interest. Lighter shades point to interest on other weeks, however, levels were lower compared to the peak.

India loved its sports personalities this year too, especially its cricketers, with both the Indian Premier League (IPL) and the Cricket ODI World Cup featuring in the 2023 calendar. Seven of the 10 most searched people in India were sportsmen. These include Shubman Gill, Rachin Ravindra, Mohammad Shami, Glenn Maxwell, David Beckham, Suryakumar Yadav and Travis Head. Along with them, actress Kiara Advani (at the first spot), YouTuber Elvish Yadav (fifth), and actor Sidharth Malhotra (sixth) complete the top 10 list.

Among the most searched sports events, the IPL took the first spot followed by the Cricket World Cup. The Asian Games and Indian Super League were the only non-cricketing sports events in the top 10 list.

**Table 2** lists the five most searched topics under a category in India in 2023.

Under the 'what is' category, the G-20, UCC and ChatGPT were in the top three. Under the 'how to' category, 'how to prevent sun damage for skin and hair with home remedies' was the most searched followed by 'how to reach my first 5k followers on YouTube' and 'how to get good at Kabaddi'.

'Coding classes near me' was searched the most in the 'near me' category. 'Onam Sadhya near me', 'gym near me' and 'Jailer movie near me' are also featured in this category. *Jawan* topped the most searched movies followed by *Gadar 2* and *Oppenheimer*. *Farzi* topped the most searched shows followed by *Wednesday* and *Asur*. 'Mango pickle', 'sex on the beach' and 'panchamrit' were the most searched recipes. 'Vietnam', followed by 'Goa' and 'Bali' were the most searched travel destinations.

Globally, the top 10 search terms in the news category were about natural disasters and shootings that happened in North America. Besides them, the world also searched for the Israel-Hamas war (first spot), the Turkey earthquake and Chandrayaan-3, which were common search interests in the global and India list. The 'Titanic' deep-sea submersible that went missing in June, was the second most searched news topic globally. While the submersible that went missing was 'Titan', the word used for searching was 'Titanic.' The war in Sudan completes the global top 10 list.

## Search history

The chart and table show the most searched topics in India, in 2023. The data were sourced from Google Trends.

**Chart 1 | The chart shows the most searched terms in 2023. The darkest shade points to the week a news item touched peak interest. The number in the circle denotes the overall rank**

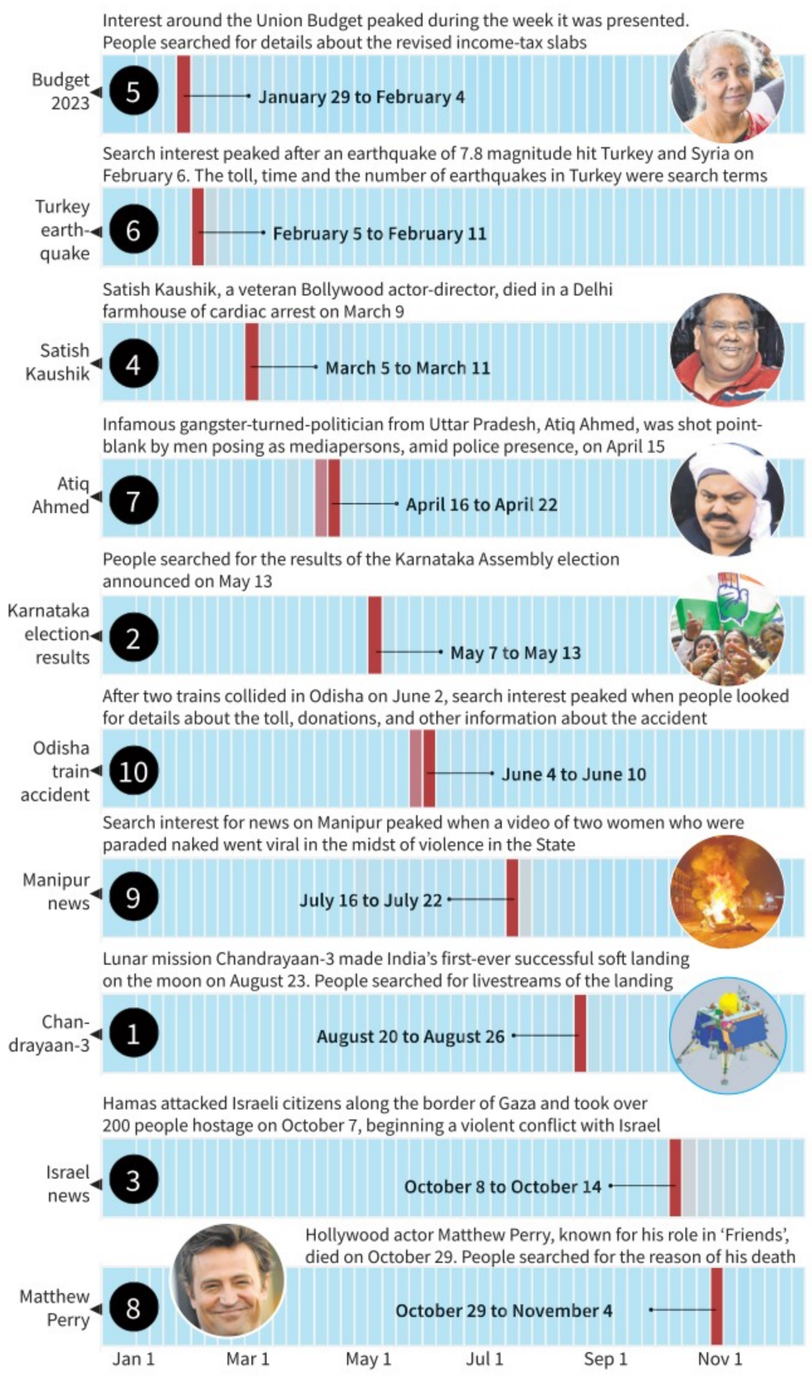


**Table 2 | The table lists the top five most searched topics under a category. For instance, under the search category "What is," the topic that found most interest was "What is G-20?"**

**What is...**
1. G-20 | 2. UCC | 3. ChatGPT | 4. Hamas | 5. What is on 28 Sept. 2023?

**How to...**
1. Prevent sun damage for skin and hair with home remedies | 2. Reach my first 5k followers on YouTube | 3. Get good at kabbadi | 4. Improve car mileage | 5. Become a chess grandmaster

**...near me**
1. Coding classes | 2. Earthquake | 3. Zudio | 4. Onam sadhya | 5. Jailer movie

**Sports events**
1. Indian Premier League | 2. Cricket World Cup | 3. Asia Cup | 4. Women's Premier League | 5. Asian Games

**People**
1. Kiara Advani | 2. Shubman Gill | 3. Rachin Ravindra | 4. Mohammed Shami | 5. Elvish Yadav

**Movies**
1. *Jawan* | 2. *Gadar 2* | 3. *Oppenheimer* | 4. *Adipurush* | 5. *Pathaan*

**Shows**
1. *Farzi* | 2. *Wednesday* | 3. *Asur* | 4. *Rana Naidu* | 5. *The Last of Us*

**Recipes**
1. Mango pickle | 2. Sex on the beach | 3. Panchamrit | 4. Hakusai | 5. Dhaniya Panjiri

**Travel destinations**
1. Vietnam | 2. Goa | 3. Bali | 4. Sri Lanka | 5. Thailand

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

**FIFTY YEARS AGO** DECEMBER 25, 1973

## Krishna Waters Award

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, Dec. 24.

The Krishna Waters Tribunal set up by the Union Ministry of Irrigation and Power under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice R.S. Bachawat submitted its report to day.

The Ministry is expected to study the implications of the findings in the next two or three days and make the report public.

The tribunal is stated to have determined 75 per cent of the dependable flow of the Krishna at 2,060 tmc ft. It has allocated 1,693.36 tmc ft. for the protected uses in all the three States of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

The remaining quantity has been divided as follows: Maharashtra 125.35 tmc ft; Karnataka 190.45 tmc ft; and Andhra Pradesh 50.84 tmc ft, making up a total of 366.64 tmc ft.

Out of the dependable flow of 2,060 tmc ft., the share of each State as stipulated by the tribunal will be: Maharashtra 565 tmc ft., Karnataka 695 tmc ft. and Andhra Pradesh 800 tmc ft. Another important finding of the tribunal is that the utilisation of waters of Karnataka and Maharashtra will be restricted to users of 695 tmc ft. and 565 tmc ft respectively in all the years. Andhra Pradesh has been permitted to use the residuary waters irrespective of the quantum, but it will not acquire any right to the excess water so used over and above 800 tmc ft. The tribunal's award is to be reviewed in 2000 A.D. A distinct gain for Andhra Pradesh is stated to be the clearance by the tribunal of the Jurala project in Telengana for 17.84 tmc ft. for irrigating lands in Gadwal, Alampur and Mahaboobnagar districts.

**A HUNDRED YEARS AGO** DECEMBER 25, 1923

## Empire cruise.

Banquet to Squadron.
Navy for S. Africa.
(Reuter's Special Service)
CAPE TOWN, Dec. 24.

Speaking at a banquet given in the City Hall by the Mayor of the Corporation in honour of officers of the visiting British Squadron and attended by Cabinet Ministers and others. Rear Admiral Field declared, that the existence of the Empire depended on sea power and urged that South Africa should develop he own nay to defend her vital communications. He expressed the opinion that nothing smaller than a light cruiser was necessary. Rear Admiral Bentwick said he knew that the first Lord of the Admiralty was prepared to lend South Africa a light cruiser.

## From Page One

### Tanker with Indians hit by drone in Red Sea

Also on Saturday, two anti-ship ballistic missiles were fired into international shipping lanes in the southern Red Sea from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, CENTCOM said, adding no ships reported being impacted by the ballistic missiles.

Between 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. (Sana'a time), *USS Laboon* was patrolling in the southern Red Sea as part of Operation Prosperity Guardian (OPG) and shot down four unmanned aerial drones originating from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen that were inbound to *USS Laboon*, it added.

These attacks represent a significant scale-up in attacks on commercial shipping from Houthi-held areas of Yemen since the launch of Israeli action in Gaza.

**New security initiative**

In response to escalation in missile and drone attacks originating from Houthi-held areas in Yemen which threatens the free flow of commerce in the Red Sea, U.S. Secretary of Defence Lloyd J. Austin on December 18 announced the establishment of Operation Prosperity Guardian, an "important new multinational security initiative under the umbrella of the combined maritime forces and the leadership of its Task Force 153, which focuses on security in the Red Sea".

**'Further probe on *Chem Pluto* attack'**

A naval explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) specialist will be boarding *m.v Chem Pluto* on arrival in Mumbai to sanitise the vessel and undertake further investigation, the Navy said in a statement.

Giving the timeline of the incident, the Navy said *Chem Pluto* was reported on fire after being hit by a projectile "likely to be a missile or drone", around 7.45 a.m. on Saturday. A naval maritime patrol aircraft flew over the vessel at 1.15 p.m. and established contact with the crew.

"*INS Mormugao* established communication with *Chem Pluto* at 7.30 p.m. to ascertain if any assistance was required. *ICGS Vikram*, also present at scene, was directed to escort the vessel to Mumbai," the Navy added.

### Police file murder case over death of 3 civilians

The bodies will be flown to their homes, an Army official said without providing details about the delay in handing over the bodies to the relatives. As reported, bodies of three of the four soldiers were decapitated. It is learnt that the families of the soldiers were called to Rajouri to identify the bodies, which were mutilated beyond recognition, and they were requested to hold the last rites there. After the families refused to cremate the bodies in Rajouri, arrangements were made to fly the bodies to their respective native places.

The People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF), a proxy outfit of Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed, had taken responsibility for the attack and posted photos after the ambush on social media. On Sunday, it released more photos, which included the pictures of four service weapons belonging to the deceased soldiers. It also released screenshots of old posts on X (formerly Twitter) of Prime Minister Narendra Modi questioning the government for not taking strong action against terrorists. A May 2, 2013 post on X by Mr. Modi that was circulated by the PAFF on social media app Telegram said, "Centre is unable to give a strong answer to Pakistan's inhuman acts. Beheading of our soldiers & now Sarabjit's death are 2 recent examples."

### '4th dose of COVID-19 vaccine not required'

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**
NEW DELHI

Senior health officials say there is no decision yet to recommend administration of a vaccine booster dose following the Union Health Ministry's recent direction to the States to be prepared for any possible surge in COVID-19 cases in the wake of the emergence of the JN.1 variant.

N.K. Arora, who heads the India SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG), told *The Hindu* on Sunday that there was no need for a fourth booster dose. "Those over 60 years of age who have comorbidities and high-risk patients in this age group may take a precautionary third dose, if they have not taken one till now. As of now, there is no need for a fourth dose for the general public. We will advise precaution and not panic," Dr. Arora said.

He said new variants, sub-variants and mutations were being reported from around the world.

"Fortunately, none of these Omicron variants have really been associated with more severe disease or hospitalisation. Symptoms of the JN.1 subvariant include fever, nasal discharge, cough, occasional diarrhoea, and severe body aches, with recovery typically within a week. The Health Ministry has already directed States to increase testing and submit positive samples for further probe," he said. India saw a rise of 656 COVID-19 infections in the 24 hours to 8 a.m. on Sunday, increasing the number of active cases to 3,742, show Ministry data. Kerala reported one death.

The Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) has confirmed that it will be "aiming to obtain licensure for XBB1 COVID variant vaccine which is very similar to the JN.1 variant for use in India".

At present, the approved and available vaccines in India are Covaxin, Covishield, and Sputnik-V.

# Plane carrying over 300 passengers, mostly Indians, allowed to leave France

The Nicaragua-bound flight was grounded and the passengers were detained over suspected human trafficking; judges cancelled the hearings of the passengers, some of whom spoke Hindi and others Tamil, due to irregularities in the procedure; there are 11 unaccompanied minors on the plane

**Press Trust of India**
PARIS

A Nicaragua-bound flight carrying 303 passengers, mostly Indians, was allowed to resume its journey on Monday three days after they were detained by the French authorities at an airport near Paris over suspected "human trafficking", according to local media reports on Sunday.

After authorising the A340 aircraft, operated by the Romanian charter company Legend Airlines, to leave, the French judges chose to cancel the hearings of the over 300 passengers owing to irregularities in the procedure, BFM TV, a news broadcast television and radio network, reported.

Four French judges earlier in the day began questioning the passengers detained by the French authorities at the Vatry airport, 150 km east of Paris, since Thursday over suspected "human trafficking".

The hearings were conducted as part of the investigation opened by the Paris prosecutor's office.

**Big relief:** Police officers stand near a rescue vehicle outside the Vatry airport on Saturday. AP

**Destination not known**

The plane is expected to take off again on Monday morning. Its destination is not yet known. It could travel to India, where the passengers are from, or to Nicaragua, its original destination, or to Dubai, from where it took off.

According to the French media, some of the passengers spoke Hindi and others Tamil and are believed to have contacted their families by telephone. Ten of the passengers have requested asylum, a newspaper quoted a source close to the case as saying.

The plane includes 11 unaccompanied minors, and two passengers in custody since Friday had their detention extended on Saturday evening for up to 48 hours, according to French prosecutors.

A lawyer for Legend Airlines, Liliana Bakayoko, denied any involvement in trafficking. A "partner" company that chartered the plane was responsible for verifying the identity documents of each passenger, and communicated the passengers' passport information to the airline 48 hours before the flight, Ms. Bakayoko said.

Human trafficking carries a potential sentence of up to 20 years in France.

On Saturday, India's embassy in France said its staff were stationed at the airport near Paris to ensure the welfare of the Indian nationals.

In an updated message on social media on Saturday evening, the embassy thanked the French authorities for working over the long Christmas holiday weekend in pursuit of an "early resolution" of the situation.

According to the reports, the travel may have been planned by the Indian passengers to reach Central America from where they can attempt to enter the United States or Canada illegally. But an anonymous tip, which indicated that passengers were "likely to be victims of human trafficking" in an organised gang, alerted the authorities.

### Retired SSP shot dead by terrorists in J&K during *azaan*

**Press Trust of India**
SRINAGAR

A 72-year-old retired police officer, who was a muezzin, was shot dead by terrorists while he was giving *azaan* – the call for prayer – from a mosque in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, the police said.

Recalling the moments before Mohammad Shafi Mir was killed, his cousin Mohammad Mustafa, who was at home, said the call for the pre-dawn prayers was being given by a loudspeaker and suddenly it stopped. Mir's last words were *reham* (mercy), he said.

The police said Mir retired as a Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) in 2012. He was shot dead by terrorists inside the mosque at Gantmulla, they said. The police have launched a search operation in the area to nab the assailants.

In a press statement, Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha condemned the terror attack and conveyed his deep sympathies to the family of Mir.

Terrorism needs to be dealt with an iron fist to provide relief to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, Democratic Progressive Azad Party chief Ghulam Nabi Azad said.

After the incident, people gathered at Mir's house and at the mosque complex. Mir is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter.

### *Silent night, holy night*

**Prayer time:** Devotees light candles on Christmas Eve outside the Sacred Heart Cathedral in New Delhi on Sunday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

### Cong. MLA disqualified after scam conviction

**The Hindu Bureau**
PUNE

Congress leader from Maharashtra and former Minister Sunil Kedar, who was recently sentenced to five years of imprisonment in connection with the Nagpur District Central Cooperative Bank scam, has been disqualified from the Legislative Assembly. Kedar was the MLA from Saoner in Nagpur.

A Gazette order of the Maharashtra Legislature Secretariat stated that Mr. Kedar stood disqualified as MLA from the date of his conviction on December 22 under provisions of Article 19(1)(e) of the Constitution and Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. The order further said that Mr. Kedar's constituency, Saoner, had become vacant from the date of the Congress leader's conviction.

The Maha Vikas Aghadi, an alliance of the Congress, the Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP faction, called for no action to be taken against Kedar until he had moved the Bombay High Court or any other higher appellate body.

### Dhankhar says Uttar Pradesh law and order improved under Adityanath; attacks Rahul

**The Hindu Bureau**
LUCKNOW

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was being praised across the world for improving the law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh.

"Before Yogi Adityanath*ji* took oath as Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh was a matter of grave concern both from the legal point of view and from the development point of view. But under the present Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh is a role model for law and order," Mr. Dhankhar said, addressing the convocation ceremony of Gautam Buddha University in Greater Noida.

In an indirect reference to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, the Vice-President said he was pained that "a parliamentarian goes to Harvard and says democracy is in danger in India".

"Let me tell you, India is the only country in the world that has constitutionally structured democracy at the village level, at the panchayat level, at the district level, at the State level, and at the Central level," Mr. Dhankhar said.

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath during the convocation ceremony in Noida. PTI

The Vice-President said Mr. Adityanath's speech at the ceremony earlier was akin to that "of a spiritual leader, a statesman and a far-thinking person".

"He [Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister] has stolen my heart. I thought a politician would be addressing. No, a spiritual leader, a statesman and a far-thinking person spoke to you," he said.

Mr. Dhankar also hailed India's growth story. "Now, we are the fifth largest global economy. Those who ruled us for centuries – England – are behind us. We have also overtaken France, and by the end of this decade will overtake Japan and Germany to become the world's third economic superpower," the Vice-President said.

He asked students to work with devotion to make India a developed nation by 2047. "Dear students, you are the foot soldiers of Bharat in 2047. You will make Bharat the most developed nation," he said.

Highlighting India's glorious university tradition, the Vice-President demanded that the Uttar Pradesh government and the Chief Minister help the Gautam Buddha University in reaching the heights of the ancient Nalanda and Takshashila universities. "I have never made any demand in life that is not worth fulfilling. You will agree that this demand can be fulfilled 100% by the Chief Minister," he said.

### As WFI is suspended, Brij Bhushan 'retires'

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

The Sports Ministry on Sunday suspended the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) till further orders after the newly elected body made a "hasty announcement" of organising the U-15 and U-20 nationals "without following due procedure and not giving sufficient notice to wrestlers" to prepare.

Former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's loyalist, Sanjay Singh, won the polls to the body on December 21.

"The new body has not followed the WFI constitution. We have not terminated the federation, but suspended it till further orders," a Sports Ministry official said.

The Ministry also said the new body was working under "complete control of former [WFI] office-bearers" – an indirect reference to Mr. Brij Bhushan – which was not in conformity with the National Sports Code.

Opposition leaders on Sunday said the government's decision to suspend the newly elected Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) was not enough to give justice to protesting wrestlers and questioned why a loyalist of former WFI president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh was allowed to contest the election to the sports body in the first place.

The WFI elections were held on December 21 with Sanjay Singh and his panel winning the polls by big margins.

The Ministry on Sunday suspended the WFI till further notice after the wrestling body made a "hasty announcement" of organising the U-15 and U-20 nationals "without following due procedure and not giving sufficient notice to wrestlers" for preparations.

"By suspending the committee if BJP-led Ministry thinks they are absolving themselves from not helping the women wrestlers, they are mistaken," the Sharad Pawar-led NCP's national spokesperson, Clyde Crasto, said on X.

"Medal surrendered by Shakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia has mounted pressure on the Sports Ministry to suspend the recently held WFI election, it's welcome but justice has not meted out to the victims," Congress leader Udit Raj said in a post on X.

## CPI(M) seeks speedy probe into civilian deaths in J&K

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

There must be a speedy investigation into the death of three civilians in Army custody in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir and those responsible for it should be punished, the CPI(M) Polit Bureau said in a statement on Sunday.

Condemning the incident, the party pointed to media reports that the three civilians – Mohammad Showkat, Safeer Hussain and Shabir Ahmad – were subjected to severe torture that resulted in their deaths.

"The J&K administration has announced compensation for the families of the deceased. But that is not enough. There has to be a speedy investigation and punishment meted out to those responsible," the party said.

"People of Jammu and Kashmir, who have long suffered from such acts of impunity, expect accountability to be fixed in the matter and justice done," the party added in the statement.

# After poll debacle, Congress drags its feet on key Rajasthan posts

All eyes are on who will be made leader of the Congress Legislature Party and whether the party will retain Dotasra, a Jat leader, as State chief; party is trying to balance the caste arithmetic in State that will be crucial for the Lok Sabha election

NEWS ANALYSIS

**Sobhana K. Nair**
NEW DELHI

The Congress was quick to make changes in the State leadership in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh after the recent debacle in the Assembly elections, but in Rajasthan, the party continues to drag its feet.

On Saturday, the party announced its long-awaited organisational reshuffle. It promoted former Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot to the position of general secretary in charge of Chhattisgarh. Last week, the party nominated former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot as a member of the National Alliance Committee. The two appointments indicate that it will be looking for a fresh face for the post of leader of the Congress Legislature Party. The other question is whether the party will retain its State chief, Govind Singh Dotasra.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge along with Rahul Gandhi, K.C. Venugopal, Ashok Gehlot and others during a review meeting on the Rajasthan Assembly election results in New Delhi. ANI

Congress insiders say the party is trying to balance the caste arithmetic in the State that will be crucial for the Lok Sabha election, which is just a few months away. If Mr. Dotasra, a prominent Jat leader, is replaced, then the party will have to appoint another leader from the community in either of the two positions. Those close to Mr. Dotasra though claim that the central leadership has not given him any indication that it is looking for his replacement.

**Front runner**

Of the 69 newly elected MLAs, sources say, Harish Chaudhary – another popular Jat leader – is one of the front runners to lead the party in the Assembly. Mr. Chaudhary won by a narrow margin of 910 votes from Baytoo in Barmer district.

As the dust settles, a post-poll analysis of the Congress's performance reveals that though it failed to repeat the 2018 sweep, the party managed to hold on to its own in eastern Rajasthan in comparison to a near wipeout in the western parts of the State. In Mr. Gehlot's home district of Jodhpur, the party won only two seats. There are at least six other districts where the party could not win a single seat – Jaisalmer, Chittorgarh, Baran, Rajsamand, Bhilwara and Bharatpur.

If the party decides to relieve Mr. Dotasra, then the real struggle will be for the State president's race, where once again the power tussle between Mr. Pilot and Mr. Gehlot is expected to play out.

Two leaders – one from eastern Rajasthan and the other from southern Rajasthan – are the top contenders.

"Dausa MLA Murari Lal Meena, who won by a margin of over 30,000 votes and is strongly supported by Mr. Pilot, and Mahendra Jeet Singh Malviya, who won the Bagidora seat by a margin of over 41,000 votes and enjoys the confidence of Mr. Gehlot, are both in contention, if the party decides to look for a fresh face," a top Congress leader said.

## INBRIEF

### Unemployment the most burning issue here: Kharge

Unemployment is the most burning issue in the country, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Sunday. In an apparent attack on the BJP-led Centre, Mr. Kharge said in a post on X in Hindi, "The youth of the country are asking where are the two crore jobs per year? Why is the process between recruitment exams and securing a job so complicated?" Quoting the periodic labour force survey (PLFS) data, the Congress president said rural unemployment in the age group of 15-19 years stood at 8.3% in the July 2022-June 2023 period, while urban unemployment was higher at 13.8%. PTI

### India, Bangladesh officials to tackle trans-border crimes

Top officials of the border security agencies of India and Bangladesh on Sunday stressed coordinated management to check trans-border crimes. They also emphasised enhanced mutual trust between the border-guarding forces, an official statement said. Inspector-General, BSF Guwahati Frontier, Dinesh Kumar Yadav, along with his field commanders, interacted with Director-General of Border Guard Bangladesh. Major General AKM Nazmul Hasan at the International Border in Assam's Dhubri district. Mr. Yadav also discussed the new design single-row fencing with the top brass. PTI

### 2 drone-dropped packets of bombs, cash seized near LoC

Two drone-dropped packets containing six battery-operated Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), a pistol and some cash were seized in a joint operation by the Army and police near the Line of Control in the Akhnoor sector in Jammu on Sunday, officials said. The timely recovery of the packets, believed to have been dropped by Pakistani drones, thwarted major strikes by terrorists on Indian soil, they said. The packets were opened with the help of a bomb disposal squad, leading to the recovery of the IEDs, a 9-mm Italian pistol, three magazines, 30 rounds, a hand grenade and ₹35,000 cash, they said. PTI

### Three Naxalites killed in Chhattisgarh encounter

At least three Naxalites were killed in a gun battle with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district on Sunday, a senior officer said. The exchange of fire took place on the forested hill near Dabbakunna village under Katekalyan police station limits between Tumakpal and Dabbakunna. After the firing stopped, the bodies of three male Naxalites, clad in 'uniform' were recovered from the spot, the IG said. A cache of explosives and weapons was also seized from the encounter site, he added. The identity of the trio was yet to be ascertained, the officer said. PTI

## Tejashwi condemns remarks by Maran on Bihar, U.P. workers

**Amit Bhelari**
PATNA

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader and Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday strongly condemned a statement allegedly made by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MP Dayanidhi Maran.

In a video, which sources in the DMK say is old, Mr. Maran purportedly said that Hindi speakers who came to Tamil Nadu from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar did menial jobs such as construction work and cleaning drains.

Since the video went viral on social media, Bihar BJP leaders have been criticising Mr. Maran for his alleged statement.

They have also demanded a clarification from leaders of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance on whether they agreed with Mr. Maran's remarks. The RJD and the DMK are part of the Opposition bloc.

Several BJP leaders, including the party's national spokesperson, shared the video on social media platform X.

**'Highly objectionable'**

Mr. Yadav said the DMK, led earlier by M. Karunanidhi, believed in social justice, and it was highly objectionable if any leader of the party made such remarks. He stressed that the RJD did not support such statements, and that labourers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were in demand across the country. "If they do not go to work there, then things will come to a standstill," Mr. Yadav said.

Tejashwi Yadav

"If they say that only people of a particular caste are cleaning the drains, then it is a different thing – that why are people of certain communities engaged in cleaning drains? However, if they say that people from Bihar and U.P. clean drains and other things at our place, then I condemn it. Such statements should be avoided. This country is one and anyone can work anywhere, hence we all should respect each other. Such things should not happen," Mr. Yadav said.

DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin is known to have friendly relations with RJD chief Lalu Prasad and his family.

## Interim V-C defies sacking order by Governor, presides over Jadavpur convocation

**Shiv Sahay Singh**
KOLKATA

A fresh controversy erupted at Kolkata's premier Jadavpur University with Governor C.V. Ananda Bose late on Saturday evening directing the removal of Interim Vice-Chancellor Buddhadeb Sau. However, Professor Sau defied the order and officiated at the university's convocation on Sunday.

Vice Chancellor Buddhadeb Sau officiating at the Jadavpur University's convocation, in Kolkata on Sunday. DEBASISH BHADURI

The sacking of the Interim Vice-Chancellor hours before the convocation resulted in an imbroglio. The West Bengal Education Department stepped in and asked Professor Sau to maintain status quo and conduct the convocation in accordance with the schedule.

Mr. Bose, also the Chancellor of the university, did not attend the function.

Speaking to pressperson, Professor Sau said that his decision to continue was in the interests of the students. "I received two letters – one from the Raj Bhavan and another from the State government. I put both the letters before the university's court, which asked me to continue," he said.

Professor Sau was appointed by the Governor in August, when a student died after falling from the university's hostel building allegedly following severe ragging by his seniors. Though Professor Sau was appointed without the consent of the State government, it now appears that he has the backing of the Trinamool Congress government as Mr. Bose has decided to remove him.

"The authorisation given to Prof. Buddhadeb Sau, as per order no. CU/WB/22/23 dated August 17, 2023, to exercise the powers and perform the duties of the office of Vice Chancellor, Jadavpur University until further orders, is withdrawn. This order will take immediate effect," the Governor's order of Saturday said.

**Legal opinion**

After the order was issued, the Interim V-C vowed his allegiance to the State government, saying that an elected government considered the well-being of the people.

Officials at the Raj Bhavan here said the Governor has sought legal opinion on whether he could grant *post-facto* approval to the convocation, without which the degrees awarded to students would be invalid.

A group of senior academics under the banner of the Educationist Forum, in a press statement on Saturday, targeted the Governor.

"The same Chancellor who holds convocations in other universities in complete defiance of the regulations now seeks to sabotage the same with regard to JU. This speaks of his doublespeak and attempt to politicise the administration of universities of West Bengal," they said.

"The Chancellor seems to give currency to an iniquitous system of governance by implementing double standards. He passes an Order only to break it in no time," they added.

## AAP's 'Badlav Yatra' comes to a close in Haryana

**The Hindu Bureau**
GURUGRAM

The 10-day 'Badlav Yatra' organised by the Aam Aadmi Party in Haryana ended on Sunday. The aim was to feel the "pulse of the masses" going into the election year and to "energise cadre" ahead of the party's rally in January.

Led by senior party leaders – Rajya Sabha member Sushil Gupta, Campaign Committee chairman Ashok Tanwar, Haryana senior vice-president Anurag Dhanda and vice-president Chitra Sarwara – the yatra was carried out simultaneously in four different parts of the State covering all 90 Assembly constituencies.

Ms. Sarwara, who travelled across the Assembly constituencies in northern Haryana starting from Kalka on December 15, told *The Hindu* over phone that the party leaders raised different issues affecting the masses on different days of the yatra ranging from unemployment, increase in crime, lack of health infrastructure, and farmers plight.

Addressing a press conference in Kaithal on the culmination of his leg of yatra, Mr. Dhanda said he did not come across a single Assembly constituency where the youth did not complain about the lack of job opportunities.

**Telangana State Medical Services & Infrastructure Development Corporation,**
Director of Health Campus, Sultan Bazar, Hyderabad-95, Telangana State
(An ISO 9001:2015 Certified Organization)
1. Tender Notice No.2 /2023/DIG/TSMSIDC, Dt. 23.12.2023
2. Tender Notice No.4/2023/EQU/TSMSIDC, Dt. 23.12.2023
3. Short Tender Notice No.12/2023/Medicine/MW /TSMSIDC, Dt:-23 .12.2023
4. Short Tender Notice No.13/2023/Surgical/MW/TSMSIDC, Dt:-23 .12.2023
Above mentioned tender are invited through e-procurement platform (online) for Procurement, supply of following under Rate contract for a period of Two Years:- **T.No.2:-** Diagnostic Kits & Reagents, **T.No.4:-** Equipments · **Short T.No.12:-**Medicines, **Short T.No.13:-** Materials & Supplies (Surgical) and Any other items related to Covid-19. Managing Director, TSMSIDC reserves the right to cancel the tender at any time without assigning any reason. For complete details, please visit Web site: **https: //tender.telangana.gov.in from 27.12.2023** onwards.
DIPR R.O.No.8965-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2023-24 Dt. 23.12.2023 Sd/- Managing Director

## External Affairs Minister to visit Russia from December 25-28

**Kallol Bhattacherjee**
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will visit Russia from December 25 to 28. During the visit, he will interact with Russian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade Denis Manturov, the External Affairs Ministry said on Sunday.

Mr. Jaishankar is expected meet his counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, who visited Delhi during the G-20 summit when he led the Russian delegation to the event.

**The visit is viewed as a major opportunity for discussion in the absence of the year-end summit**

"The time-tested India-Russia partnership remained stable and resilient and continues to be characterised by the spirit of the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership," said the Ministry announcing the visit, during which Mr. Jaishankar is scheduled to meet officials in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Mr. Jaishankar's visit is being viewed as an important exchange between the two sides as this will give an opportunity for discussion in the absence of the year-end India-Russia summit, which was last held in 2021, and has not been held since due to Russia's war in Ukraine.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA - DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**
**Office of the Additional Chief Engineer, Drainage Circle, Balasore.**
Email ID : sedcbls@yahoo.com
**"e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE NO.- ACEDCBLS-16/2023-24**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Name of the Work | Drainage Works (Under D.I.P. Scheme) |
| 2. | Name of Project | 1 No of individual work |
| 3. | Estimated Cost of individual Works | Estimate cost of individual work Rs.2,52,90,363/- (Excluding G.S.T.) |
| 4. | Period of Completion | 11 ( Eleven Calendar month ) |
| 5. | Bid Identification Number | ACEDCBLS/DDBLS-01-16-2023-24 |
| 6. | Date & Time of availability of Bid document in the Portal | From 30.12.23 at : 10 hours to 15.01.24 at : 17 hours |
| 7. | Date of Opening of technical bid | Dt.16.01.2024 at:11.30 hours, In the Office of the Additional Chief Engineer, Drainage Circle, Balasore. |
| 8. | Date of Opening of Financial bid | To be uploaded in portal |
| 9. | Date of Lottery (if required) | To be notified |
| 10. | Procurement Officer/Name & address of the Officer Inviting Bids | Additional Chief Engineer, Drainage Circle, Balasore. |

Further details can be seen from the Govt. Web site : www.tendersorissa.gov.in .
A-1076: Additional Chief Engineer, Drainage Circle, Balasore.
OIPR-32190/11/0021/2324

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**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (CIVIL), IDCO, IDCO TOWER, BHUBANESWAR**
**Bid Identification No. Civil/EST-37 / 2023-24**
**Notice No:- 40370 dt.19.12.2023**
**NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement**

1. Name of the Work : Design, Supply, Installation, Construction, Testing and Commissioning of 125 KLD Capacity FMR type/ MBBR Type Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) with Civil Structures for Kalamandal Project near Sainik School, Bhubaneswar.
2. Value of the Work : Rs.77.60 Lakhs (Approx.)
3. Period of completion : 03 (Three) Calendar Months
4. Availability of tender online for Bidding
   I. Start Date : 18:00 Hours of dt. 27.12.2023
   II. End Date : 15:00 Hours of dt. 12.01.2024
   III. Opening date : 16:00 Hours of dt. 12.01.2024

Tender details can be seen from the e-procurement portal: **www.tendersorissa.gov.in.** Corrigendum or Addendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen **in e-procurement portal** as well as in **IDCO website**.
Sd/- **Chief General Manager (Civil), IDCO, Bhubaneswar**
CAD-3410: OIPR-14003/11/0322/2324

## INBRIEF

### Govt. taking proactive steps to control food inflation: Goyal

Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal on Sunday said the Centre had taken many proactive steps in the past few years to control retail prices of food items, and that the government would keep inflation under control while ensuring the country's economic growth. Addressing an event in New Delhi to celebrate National Consumers Day, Mr. Goyal said: "Today, India has become the fastest growing large economy. Going forward, we will keep inflation under check and also ensure economic growth." Mr. Goyal added that 140 new price monitoring centres had been set up to keep a close watch on wholesale and retail prices of essential commodities. PTI

### Jaishankar condoles death of former Dominican envoy

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Sunday condoled the death of Hans Dannenberg, a diplomat of the Dominican Republic. He described Mr. Dannenberg, a former envoy of the Caribbean nation to New Delhi, as an "extraordinary friend of India". "Deeply grieved to learn of the passing away of Ambassador Hans Dannenberg of the Dominican Republic," Mr. Jaishankar posted on X. "His tenure as the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in New Delhi is fondly remembered by those who served then. He personally built Dominican Republic's relationship with India and took it to great political and economic heights," he said. PTI

# Centre plans to revive tax cuts on sugar exports

Sugar industry has appealed to Food Department to change shipments back to the 'free' category from 'restricted'; plans also in the works to enhance existing tax cut rates for export of tea

**Vikas Dhoot**
NEW DELHI

**Sweet deal**: Workers load a sack filled with sugar onto a truck in Kolkata. FILE PHOTO

The Union government is trying to work out a mechanism to provide tax remission benefits on exports of sugar, which was placed in the 'restricted' category in mid-2022, and is also considering a demand from tea exporters to raise their tax remission rates.

The Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products (RoDTEP) scheme, launched in January 2021, is aimed at ensuring that no domestic taxes are added on to goods' shipments meant for export. Authorities had denied benefits under the scheme to sugar exporters after the sweetener was removed from the 'free' category in June 2022 as a pre-emptive measure to boost domestic availability and avoid a spurt in prices.

"Any item which is restricted is not entitled for the RoDTEP benefits. So once sugar was brought into the restricted list, it has been prevented from getting RoDTEP," a senior Commerce Ministry official told *The Hindu*.

"The sugar industry has appealed to the Department of Food and Public Distribution to change the nature of the restriction and bring it back to the free category along with other riders, like seeking permissions from the Directorate of Sugar for exports. Once the Department of Food takes a decision, we will see what kind of notification can be issued to restore the RoDTEP benefits," the official added.

**Gujarat HC directive**

Earlier this month, the Gujarat High Court noted that the government had allowed the export of sugar from time to time based on specific permissions and held that those shipments should be considered eligible for the RoDTEP benefits. The court had underlined that a distinction was warranted between goods whose exports are restricted altogether, and those that are restricted with conditions.

"If the government means to unambiguously provide these tax remissions to restricted products, it may need to create a fresh category for merchandise exports, going beyond the present ones of 'free' and 'restricted', to denote that certain exports are permitted on a conditional basis," said Abhishek A. Rastogi, founder of Rastogi chambers, who argued for the petitioners in the Gujarat High Court case.

The Commerce Ministry is also considering an enhancement in the RoDTEP rates for tea exports, especially for high-quality tea, based on an industry request. "The Indian Tea Association has submitted data for review of the RoDTEP rates and this has been forwarded to the official panel constituted for updating the RoDTEP rate schedules for different products," said an official.

# WHO urges nations to raise surveillance against COVID-19

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization (WHO) has urged countries in Southeast Asia to strengthen surveillance in view of the increasing cases of respiratory diseases, including COVID-19 and its JN.1 variant and influenza.

The WHO also urged people to take protective measures.

"The COVID-19 virus continues to evolve, change, and circulate in all countries globally. While current evidence suggests the additional public health risk posed by JN.1 is low, we must continue to track the evolution of these viruses to tailor our response. For this, countries must strengthen surveillance and sequencing, and ensure sharing of data," said Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, WHO-Southeast Asia.

**Prevalence of JN.1**

The WHO has classified JN.1 as a variant of interest (VOI) following its rapid global spread.

In recent weeks, JN.1 was reported in multiple countries, and its prevalence has been rapidly increasing globally.

Considering the limited available evidence, the additional public health risk posed by JN.1 is currently evaluated as low at the global level, Dr. Singh said.

It is anticipated that this variant may cause an increase in number of COVID-19 cases amid a surge of other viral and bacterial infections, especially in countries entering the winter season.

"As people travel and gather for festivities during the holiday season, spending a lot of time together indoors where poor ventilation facilitates transmission of viruses that cause respiratory diseases, they must take protective measures and seek timely clinical care when unwell," Dr. Singh said.

She emphasised the importance of vaccination against COVID-19 and influenza, especially for people at high risk. "All WHO-approved COVID-19 vaccines continue to protect against severe diseases and deaths from all variants including JN.1," she said.

In May, following a sustained decline in the trajectory of COVID-19 cases, hospitalisations and deaths, and high levels of population immunity to SARS-CoV-2, the WHO declared that COVID-19 no longer constituted a public health emergency of international concern.

# 140 private universities set up in India over past 5 years; Gujarat has highest share

**Press Trust of India**
NEW DELHI

**28 universities started in Gujarat during the period, 15 such institutions were established in Maharashtra**

As many as 140 private universities were established in the country during the past five years with the highest number being set up in Gujarat, followed by Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, show data provided by the Union Education Ministry.

The data say 28 private universities were established in Gujarat and 15 in Maharashtra during the period.

Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka have 14 and 10 of them, respectively.

"A private university is established by an Act passed by the State legislature concerned and notification issued by the State government concerned," a senior Education Ministry official said. "The name of a private university is included in the list of universities by the University Grants Commission (UGC) as per Section 2(f) of the UGC Act, 1956, on receipt of the copies of the Act and notification from the university," he said. Such private universities are empowered to award general degree programmes without the specific approval of the commission, the official said.

"However, the approvals for running professional and medical programmes are given by the respective regulatory or statutory bodies, and such programmes are governed by the norms of respective bodies such as the All India Council for Technical Education, National Medical Commission, and the Dental Council of India," he added.

Seven private universities were established in Chhattisgarh in the past five years, while Jharkhand and Rajasthan got six each.

Five universities each were established in Bihar, Odisha, Uttarakhand and Telangana, while four each were set up in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Manipur, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, and Uttar Pradesh.

At 40, the highest number of private universities were established in the academic year 2018-19.

# BJP hosts Gita chanting event in Kolkata; thin attendance, says ruling Trinamool Congress

**Shiv Sahay Singh**
KOLKATA

Thousands of people on Sunday participated in a Bhagavad Gita chanting event at the Brigade Parade Ground here, touted as a "great success" of the West Bengal BJP leadership.

Dwarka Sharada Peeth's Sankaracharya Sadanand Saraswati presided over the event named '*Lokkho Konthe Gita Path* (Gita chanting by one lakh people)'.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised the event. "It is pleasing to hear about '*Lokkho Kanthe Gita Path*'... The initiative aimed at the recitation of the *Gita* by one lakh people is truly laudable," he said on social media.

"Our cultural heritage is an amalgamation of lofty traditions, profound knowledge and philosophical-spiritual wisdom. Inclusivity, cultural diversity and harmony are our inherent strengths," Mr. Modi wrote in the message.

**Collective chant:** Participants at a Bhagavad Gita recitation event at Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata on Sunday. DEBASISH BHADURI

The organisers had earlier said that the Prime Minister would attend the event, and posters to that effect were put up at different places in Kolkata. Later, the organisers said Mr. Modi would not be able to attend the congregation.

The Prime Minister, in his message, said he was "positive that the recitation of Srimad Bhagavad Gita by such a huge gathering of people who have come together from different walks of life will not only boost social harmony but also infuse energy in our nation's development journey".

Among the BJP leaders who participated in the event were Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari; BJP State president Sukanta Majumdar; and Saumitra Khan, S.S. Ahluwalia and Swapan Dasgupta, MPs.

**'Awakening of Hindus'**

Describing the event as a grand success, Mr. Adhikari said it marked the "awakening of Hindus". The BJP leader accused the West Bengal government of being "anti-Hindu" for holding the Teachers Eligibility Test on the same day.

In a post on social media, he said: "The extraordinary initiative aimed at mass recitation of Bhagavad Gita by a record one lakh devotees was successfully organised by the Sanatan Sanskriti Sansad, Motilal Bharat Tirtha Seba Mission Ashram and Akhil Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad. I feel blessed to be the one voice among the 1 lakh voices that chanted Bhagavad Gita together."

The organisers said there were 20 blocks at the grounds, each with 5,000 people. A large number of seers clad in saffron were present along with devotees.

The Trinamool Congress leadership said the event did not attract large crowds. "If the assembly was about 3,750 people, the organisers could have held the event at Shradhananda Park (a small venue) rather than Brigade Parade Grounds," Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said. In the past, the Trinamool leadership had organised similar *Gita* chanting events in other parts of the State.

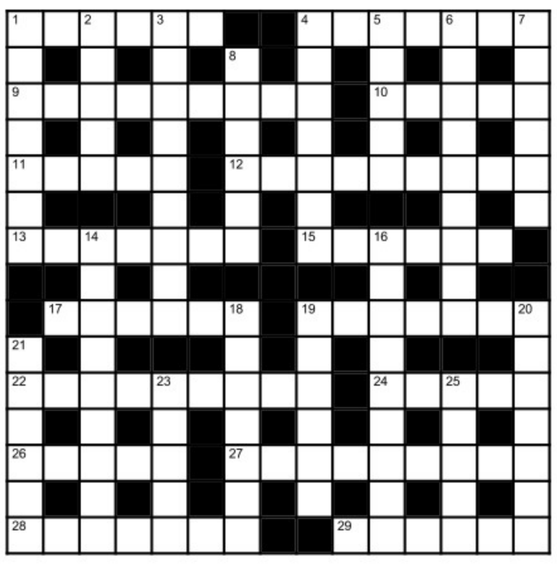
Political observers have described such events as "competitive communalism" between the ruling party and the BJP.

## TH CROSSWORD + 14054

(set by Hypatia)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



**Across**

1 Bird gasping's no good (6)
4 Messenger carrying a cake oddly in box (7)
9 Taken by PM Modi entering European Union with the German backing (9)
10 Jolly couple using drug for acting (5)
11 Next race entertains more (5)
12 Auditor's cardinal rule (9)
13 Approaches pet returning with spasms (7)
15 Strategic move in match shortened slightly (6)
17 Greek Church embracing trendy Dr. Seuss character (6)
19 Pondered about lives wasted (7)
22 Identify partner (9)
24 Generate Braille removing the French sign (5)
26 Regretted about stealing minute object (5)
27 Most of this lot ran amok in sports event (9)
28 Record store with navy's symbol (7)
29 Say, spring in step as shown regularly (6)

**Down**

1 Gift here and now (7)
2 Traces of fertilizers easily allow seeds to spread (5)
3 One running saloon restricts it over quarantine (9)
4 Promising to sacrifice bishop for pawn? That's sweet (7)
5 Entertainer and actor frequently join one boring host (5)
6 Declines Academy Awards (9)
7 Rarely seen fencing a palace in France (6)
8 Suspends doctor providing copies (6)
14 Arrange charms over one's tree initially in festival (9)
16 Film legend goes below the French plant for a traditional kiss (9)
18 Play there hiring a new console (7)
19 It covers nerves from setter's feelings essentially (6)
20 Persuaded *Shaman* in war dance to return inside (5,2)
21 Light from LED flickering under fire (6)
23 Pass around a rapper's first song (5)
25 Brides embrace lasting love symbolized basically in rings (5)

## SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

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**Solution to previous puzzle**

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**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**

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| 5 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 5 |
| 9 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| 3 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 9 | 8 |
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## FAITH

### Jesus is a light for all

Christmas is celebrated for two reasons: the birth of Jesus and the commencement of the provision of salvation through Jesus Christ. The shepherds of humble stock were the first to be told about the birth of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of St Luke, Chapter 2 says the Angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds and announced that the Saviour of the world was born. The shepherds were the first to be called to action. Isaiah 60:1 says, "Arise, shine, for thy light has come." Jesus is a light for all, the rich, the poor, the high and the low. His light shines in the darkness of this world, in the darkest recesses of our heart. He is reaching out to everyone, people who are ill; people living with great burdens in their heart; emptiness, feelings of depression, rejection, anxiety and fear. The Lord's message is clear: Arise, shine. Jesus, your light has come. There is no situation that can hold anyone down if one chooses to rise, to obey the first call to action: choose to arise, said Rev WJ Samuel in a message.

When the angels announced the arrival of Jesus, the shepherds said, "Let us go to Bethlehem." One needs to go to Jesus, not just during this season, but every day. Also, the shepherds used inclusive pronoun and said, "Let US go." This is the time to look beyond 'me' and 'my family' and reach out to the needy and share the joy of Christmas.

TEHRAN

## Iran summons Russian envoy over statement on disputed Gulf islands

AFP

Iran has summoned Russia's envoy to protest a statement by Moscow and Arab countries calling for talks over three islands controlled by Tehran but claimed by the UAE. The move came days after Iran's key ally Russia signed a treaty with Arab countries which "supported peaceful solutions" for the dispute over the islands. AFP

VIENNA

## Austria detains three suspected Islamists amid security fears

AFP

Three persons were detained in Austria for suspected involvement in an "Islamist network" as Vienna and Cologne step up police controls citing heightened security concerns during Christmas and New Year's eve. Police in Germany and Austria have concentrated checks around churches and religious events following threats. AFP

LONDON

## U.K. to send naval ship to Guyana amid Venezuela border dispute

AFP

Britain will deploy a naval ship off Guyana, as the South American nation faces a border dispute with Venezuela over the oil-rich Essequibo region. The deployment follows a visit by a British junior Foreign Minister to Guyana earlier this month, intended to offer the U.K.'s support for the country, an ally and former British colony. AFP

DUBAI

## Iran's Navy adds sophisticated cruise missiles to its armoury

AP

Iran's Navy on Sunday added domestically produced sophisticated cruise missiles to its arsenal, state TV reported. Both Talaeieh and Nasir cruise missiles have arrived at a naval base near the Indian Ocean in the southern Iranian port of Konarak, some 1,400 km southeast of the capital, Tehran. AFP

# Israel bombs northern Gaza as both sides suffer losses

Almost 166 Palestinians, nine Israeli soldiers killed in past 24 hours; war exacting a heavy cost, says Netanyahu; a team of Palestinian Islamic Jihad group arrives in Cairo for talks with Egypt officials

**Reuters**
CAIRO/JERUSALEM

Israel bombed areas of Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip overnight, with fighting throughout Sunday morning, as Gaza authorities and the Israeli military both announced mounting death tolls.

Israel says it has achieved almost complete operational control over northern Gaza and is preparing to expand a ground offensive against Hamas to other areas. But Jabalia residents reported aerial bombardment and shelling from Israeli tanks, which they said had moved further into the town.

A Gaza Health Ministry spokesman said on Sunday 166 Palestinians had been killed in the past 24 hours, taking the total Palestinian death toll to 20,424. Tens of thousands have been wounded, with many bodies believed trapped under rubble. Almost all of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced.

**Dystopian terrain:** Almost all of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced as a result of Israeli attacks. AFP

The Israeli military said nine soldiers had been killed in the past day, bringing to 155 its published combat losses. The daily toll was one of the highest for Israeli forces.

"This is a difficult morning, after a very difficult day of fighting in Gaza," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at a Cabinet meeting on Sunday. "The war is exacting a very heavy cost from us; however we have no choice (but) to continue to fight."

Egyptian and Qatari mediators have been trying to break the deadlock to end the violence. A delegation of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group, which also has captives in custody in Gaza, arrived in Cairo for talks with Egyptian officials over "ways to end the Israeli aggression on our people in Gaza".

# Election candidates rush to file nomination papers for February 8 polls in Pakistan

**Press Trust of India**
ISLAMABAD

Candidates aspiring to contest the February 8 general elections in Pakistan rushed to submit their nomination papers, as the deadline to file their candidature expired on Sunday.

The nomination process started on December 20 and was initially set to be completed on Friday but the Election Commission of Pakistan extended it by two days on the demand of various political parties.

**Poll bugle:** Bilawal Bhutto Zardari submits his documents in Sindh on the last day for filing nomination papers on Sunday. AFP

### Seat split-up

The National Assembly's 266 general and 70 reserved seats and over 600 seats of four provincial Assemblies are up for grabs.

Already many leading politicians, including incarcerated former Premier Imran Khan, former three-time Premier Nawaz Sharif, former President Asif Ali Zardari, former Prime Ministers Yusuf Raza Gilani, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and Shehbaz Sharif and other influential leaders have filed their documents.

Major parties in the election are the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and others local parties are in the field.

# Pakistani court returns Imran's appeal in graft case

**Press Trust of India**
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Supreme Court office has returned an appeal seeking to set aside the three-year conviction of former Prime Minister Imran Khan in the Toshakhana corruption case.

The registrar's office returned the appeal moved by 71-year-old Khan under Article 185 of the Constitution, challenging the Islamabad High Court (IHC) decision of rejecting a similar plea for lacking requirements, including the absence of actual controversies or chronology of the past litigation.

The petition was filed with a plea to overturn the August 5 conviction of Mr. Khan by an additional sessions judge of the IHC for illegally selling state gifts.

# Sri Lanka police detain nearly 15,000 in drug crackdown

**Agence France-Presse**
COLOMBO

**Rights activists slam police who claim to have siezed 440 kg of narcotics in their search operations**

Sri Lanka's police announced the arrests of nearly 15,000 people during a week-long military-backed anti-narcotics drive, a crackdown denounced by rights activists.

The police said their operation, code-named "Yukthiya" or "Justice", led to the seizure of almost 440 kilograms of narcotics, including 272 kg of cannabis, 35 kg of hashish and nine kilograms of heroin.

A police statement said 13,666 suspects were arrested while nearly 1,100 addicts were detained and sent for compulsory rehabilitation.

The police said raids will pause for the Christmas holidays as officers needed to be deployed on security-related duties, but will resume after Tuesday, which is a Buddhist holiday.

Human rights lawyer Hejaaz Hizbullah said the police raids were illegal as they were conducted without search warrants.

Rights activist Ambika Satkunanathan posted on social media that the searches were not based on evidence but were "targeting only poor areas".

# UN calls for rescue of 185 Rohingya adrift in Indian Ocean

**Agence France-Presse**
GENEVA

The United Nations called on Saturday for the urgent rescue of 185 people, mainly women and children, on a distressed boat last heard to be near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Indian Ocean.

Around 70 of those onboard are children and 88 are women, the UNHCR refugee agency said in a statement.

### One feared dead

"At least a dozen are feared to be in critical condition with one individual reported to have already died," it said. "Many more could die under the watch of numerous coastal states without timely rescue."

UNHCR spokesman Babar Baloch said the people onboard were Rohingya refugees, and said the agency was appealing to all the coastal authorities in the area to urgently rescue them.

"It is really a desperate situation," he said.

Thousands of the mostly Muslim Rohingya, heavily persecuted in Myanmar, undertake risky sea journeys from Myanmar and refugee camps in Bangladesh every year trying to reach Malaysia or Indonesia.

More than 2,000 Rohingya are believed to have attempted the risky journey to Southeast Asian countries in 2022.

# Furnace explosion at Chinese-owned nickel plant in Indonesia kills at least 13

**Agence France-Presse**
PALU

A smelting furnace exploded on Sunday at a Chinese-owned nickel plant on Indonesia's Sulawesi island, killing at least 13 workers and injuring dozens of others, the police and a company official said.

It was the latest in a series of deadly incidents at nickel smelting plants in Indonesia that are part of China's ambitious transnational development program known as the Belt and Road Initiative.

Nickel is a key component in global battery production for electric vehicles.

**First aid:** A Chinese worker injured in the explosion at a nickel smelter furnace in Indonesia is being brought to hospital. AFP

At least four Chinese and nine Indonesian workers died when the furnace exploded while they were repairing it, the Central Sulawesi police chief said.

The blast was so powerful it demolished the furnace and damaged parts of the side walls of the building, the official said, while adding that about 46 workers were injured, including 14 Chinese nationals, some in critical condition.

### Investigation underway

Authorities are working to determine whether negligence by the company led to the deaths.

The accident occurred at PT Indonesia Tsingshan Stainless Steel, a subsidiary of PT Indonesia Morowali Industrial Park, known as PT IMIP, in the Bahodopi neighborhood of Morowali regency.

"We sincerely apologise for this incident and we are working closely with authorities to investigate what caused the accident," company spokesperson said.

# Hold tight, don't let go of a policy cover

**COVERNOTE**

A life cover is a long-term commitment made with an important responsibility in mind; however, when circumstances change, we need a way out, but surrender of policy should be the last option

**K. Nitya Kalyani**

Surrender of insurance policies is set to become less loss-making as the regulator has proposed lower charges and better payout.

Long-term financial decisions are difficult to make and sometimes we even wish we could roll them back.

A life insurance policy is a long-term commitment made with an important responsibility in mind. However, when circumstances change, we need a way out, but surrender of your policy should be your last option.

We may need to move away from an investment commitment for various reasons. The premium is unaffordable because of straitened finances.

Or, the change could simply be in our own minds and we realise this may not be the best investment to continue with.

**Policy lapse**

At this point the options are to abandon the policy and let it 'lapse', surrender it or make it "paid-up". In each case, we can stop paying the premium, but the benefits we sacrifice or retain are very different.

**Losing coverage**

When the policy lapses, we lose out on the coverage and the premium already paid.

When we surrender, the insurer offers you a lumpsum payment if you have held the policy for a specified minimum period, and coverage ceases. The third is the best of the three where, if the policy is eligible to become 'paid-up', a reduced life cover continues till the maturity date. This won't be strictly proportional, but is better than losing it all.

There are options better than these as well. If you can take a loan against your policy, you can turn that money around and pay instalment premiums, even of several policies.

Ask your insurer for a premium holiday. However, only some types of policies allow it. But have a game plan to make it up as soon as you can. Should the policy lapse, you can also revive some types of policies.

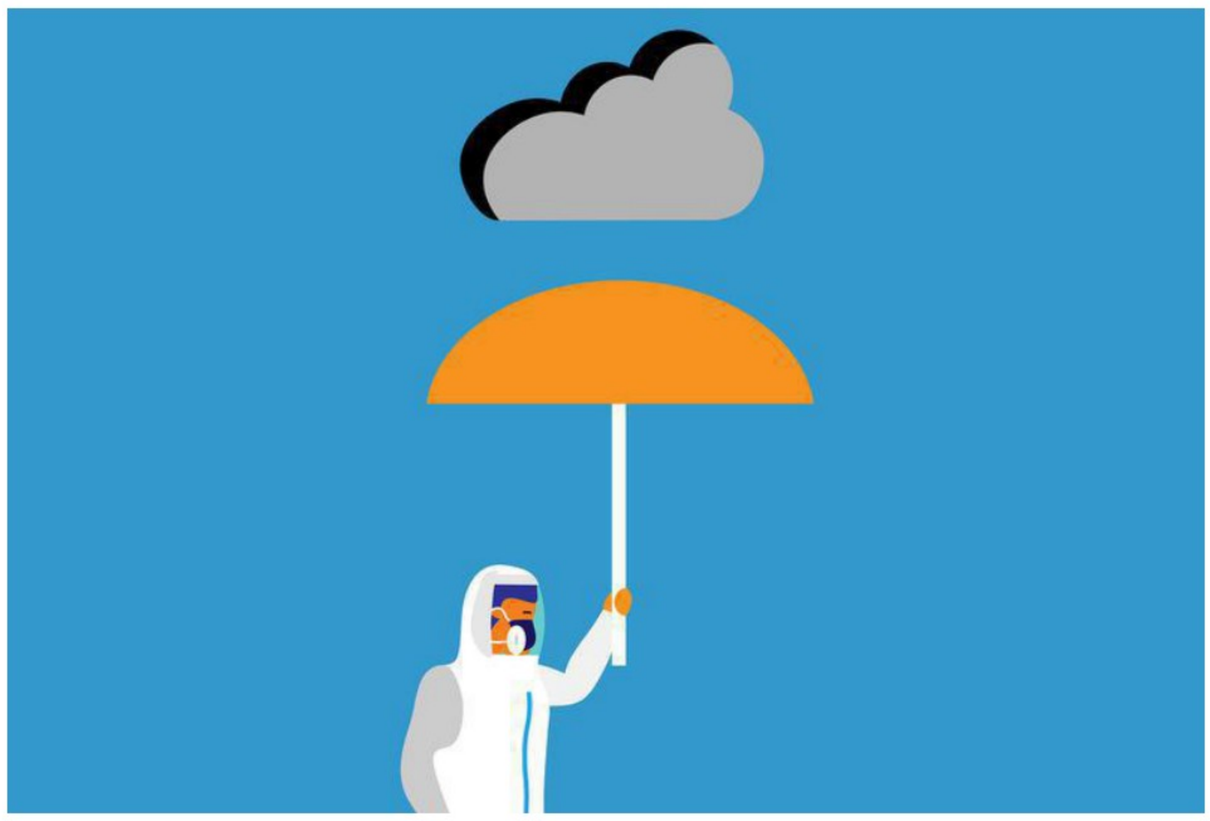
Check if you can fund the premium through other sources. Loan against fixed deposit is an often-forgotten source of funds.

The other caution is, do not foreclose a deposit and lose out on interest. If under pressure, some FDs offer partial pre-closure and you can check that out.

As said before, let surrender be your last resort in insurance, unlike in spirituality which pervades the air in this month of *Margazhi*.

*(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)*

**Send queries** on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.



**Heightened risk:** Pollution hampers the active part of lifestyle, forcing people to remain indoors. GETTYIMAGES/STOCK

# Mitigating pollution with health insurance policy

Rising pollution brings along severe health consequences; a recent study shows exposure to polluted air has correlation to type-2 diabetes making health cover a non-negotiable safety shield

**PROTECTING HEALTH**

**Siddharth Singhal**

A cloud of toxic air engulfed entire north India recently with the Air Quality Index (AQI) in Delhi NCR breaching the 500 mark, which is categorised as severe.

Masks on faces, which a common sight during COVID-19, have made a comeback in public spaces. The situation is so grim that it even impacted the Cricket World Cup.

On one hand, England players had to use inhalers because of high levels of pollution while the Bangladesh team cancelled a training session when they visited Delhi for a match.

This year, the situation got pretty severe even before Diwali festivities began. The tragedy was it had become a recurring problem. And, prolonged exposure to high levels of air pollution leads to severe health problems. This makes health insurance a non-negotiable safety shield during these times.

**Health implications**

Rising pollution brings along severe health consequences. According to a recent study, exposure to polluted air has direct correlation to type-2 diabetes. The study, conducted over seven years among 12,000 men and women in Delhi and Chennai, found breathing air with high levels of PM2.5 particles results in high blood sugar levels and increased type 2 diabetes incidence.

> Medical experts say breathing air with high levels of pollutants is similar to smoking 25-30 cigarettes a day, raising the risk of lung cancer and heart disease

According to medical experts, breathing air with high levels of pollutants is similar to smoking 25-30 cigarettes a day. The short-term implications include eye irritation, itchy throat, and respiratory issues like loss of breath. However, prolonged exposure can also lead to a raised risk of lung cancer and chronic heart disease.

It also reduces life expectancy by taking several years off a person's life.

Another important factor is how pollution hampers the active part of lifestyle. Doctors advise people to stay indoors and avoid physical activity, especially exercise, during periods of high levels of air pollution. While this helps us avoid short-term health risks, it also leads to a sedentary lifestyle which may have long-term health implications. This is especially so for people who may already be going through health complications like diabetes, which require regular physical activity to keep it under check.

While there's little we can do about pollution right now, we do have control over protecting ourselves financially from the higher risk of chronic illnesses it brings. The reassuring part is health insurance offers extensive coverage for such health troubles. Here's how to safeguard yourself with the right coverage:

**Coverage for PEDs:**

Those with diabetes can take comfort in specialised health insurance plans that provide coverage for pre-existing diabetes right from day one. In fact, those suffering from chronic diabetes can also opt for health insurance plans that provide extensive coverage. These are the individuals with high blood sugar levels who require insulin to keep diabetes under check. The extensive coverage includes not only emergency assistance but also regular health check-ups and monitoring. This empowers policyholders and equips them with the right information to better manage their health.

**OPD coverage**

Health insurance generally covers hospitalisation expenses which may be caused due to ailments arising out of high levels of pollution. However, if one lives in a city that sees regular bouts of toxic air, it is advisable to get OPD coverage as well.

That is because air pollution can lead to some short-term health complications which may not need hospitalisation, but may need medical attention including doctor consultations and medical tests. Having OPD coverage spares you from out-of-pocket expenses owing to eye problems, cold and cough, respiratory problems, skin allergies, etc.

**Critical illness cover**

It is also a good idea to get a Critical Illness cover which gives the policyholder a lump sum amount if they are diagnosed with any listed critical illness like cancer or heart disease. The hospitalisation bill can shoot to ₹40-50 lakh in this case. After all, the connection between pollution and such ailments is well-established. This coverage can be used to cover the high cost of medical treatment which is common with such ailments, and also to replace any loss of income arising out of that.

**High sum insured**

The importance of an adequate sum insured cannot be stressed upon enough, especially in metro cities. Sum insured of at least ₹50 lakh-₹1 crore is important for those exposed to high levels of pollution consistently.

Also, a cover of ₹1 core for two adults in a metro city is quite affordable at about ₹1,300 monthly premium. This helps one afford critical medical care, which is crucial for chronic ailments aggravated by pollution like lung cancer, the cost of which can run significantly high.

*(The author is Business Head, Health Insurance, Policybazaar.com)*

# Homing in on down payment

**THINKINVESTOR**

If your income is not volatile, you should consider making 25% down payment and borrowing the rest. This will allow you to channel your additional savings into financial assets

**Venkatesh Bangaruswamy**

Most borrow money to buy a house for self-occupation. The question is: should you make 25% down payment and borrow the rest to buy the house or should you make a larger down payment? In this article, we discuss the factors to mull before deciding on the down-payment amount.

**Lumpy investment**

You have two assets during working life – human capital and your wealth. Human capital refers to the present value of your future active income (the income earned using your skills). You save and create wealth, the other asset, from your active income. At the beginning of your career, your human capital will be large and your wealth small. As you progress in career and save from active income, you accumulate more wealth.

Now, when you borrow money from a bank, you convert some of the human capital into wealth. How? The bank is willing to lend money because of your ability to repay the loan. That ability comes from future active income ( human capital). The borrowing helps you buy a house today, creating wealth in the form of a house, a physical (real) asset. So, the more you borrow, the more of human capital is converted into wealth. The issue is this wealth is concentrated in one single lumpy illiquid asset (your house). So, converting this wealth into cash later, if required, may be difficult.

Would it help if you borrow less and make a larger down payment? Not really. Your home equity (own money) will now be more and interest payments on mortgage lower. That would no doubt significantly lower costs but also lock-in more of savings into a single lumpy illiquid asset. So, a lower or a higher down payment is not necessarily better than the other.

**Conclusion**

The percentage of down payment on your house must be based on your income volatility, the uncertainty in the level of your cash inflows. If your income is not volatile, you should consider making a 25% down payment and borrowing the rest.

This will allow you to channel your additional savings into financial assets such as equity and bonds. If your income is volatile, reducing the proportion of bank borrowing would be preferable.

**Emotional well-being**

Finally, your emotional well-being is just as important.

If you are uncomfortable with a large borrowing, making a significant down payment would be meaningful.

*(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)*

## Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

| Bank Name | Interest Rates (%) Highest Slab | 1-year Tenure | 3-year Tenure | 5-year Tenure |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Small Finance Banks** | | | | |
| AU Small Finance Bank | 8.00 | 6.75 | 8.00 | 7.25 |
| Capital Small Finance Bank | 7.60 | 7.50 | 7.15 | 7.10 |
| Equitas Small Finance Bank | 8.50 | 8.20 | 8.00 | 7.25 |
| ESAF Small Finance Bank | 8.50 | 6.00 | 6.75 | 6.25 |
| Fincare Small Finance Bank | 8.61 | 7.65 | 8.11 | 8.00 |
| Jana Small Finance Bank | 8.50 | 8.00 | 8.50 | 7.25 |
| Suryoday Small Finance Bank | 8.60 | 6.85 | 8.60 | 8.25 |
| Ujjivan Small Finance Bank | 8.25 | 8.25 | 7.20 | 7.20 |
| Unity Small Finance Bank | 9.00 | 7.35 | 7.65 | 7.65 |
| Utkarsh Small Finance Bank | 8.50 | 8.00 | 8.50 | 7.50 |
| **Private Sector Banks** | | | | |
| Axis Bank | 7.10 | 6.70 | 7.10 | 7.00 |
| Bandhan Bank | 7.85 | 7.25 | 7.25 | 5.85 |
| City Union Bank | 7.00 | 6.75 | 6.50 | 6.25 |
| CSB Bank | 7.75 | 5.00 | 5.75 | 5.75 |
| DBS Bank | 7.50 | 7.00 | 6.50 | 6.50 |
| DCB Bank | 8.00 | 7.15 | 7.60 | 7.40 |
| Federal Bank | 7.50 | 6.80 | 7.00 | 6.60 |
| HDFC Bank | 7.20 | 6.60 | 7.00 | 7.00 |
| ICICI Bank | 7.10 | 6.70 | 7.00 | 7.00 |
| IDFC First Bank | 7.75 | 6.50 | 7.25 | 7.00 |
| IndusInd Bank | 7.50 | 7.50 | 7.25 | 7.25 |
| Jammu & Kashmir Bank | 7.50 | 7.10 | 6.50 | 6.50 |
| Karnataka Bank | 7.25 | 6.95 | 6.50 | 6.50 |
| Karur Vysya Bank | 7.50 | 7.00 | 7.00 | 6.50 |
| Kotak Mahindra Bank | 7.25 | 7.10 | 7.00 | 6.20 |
| Nainital Bank | 7.05 | 6.70 | 6.25 | 5.75 |
| RBL Bank | 8.00 | 7.50 | 7.50 | 7.10 |
| SBM Bank India | 7.75 | 6.00 | 6.00 | 7.75 |
| South Indian Bank | 7.40 | 6.70 | 6.60 | 6.00 |
| Tamilnad Mercantile Bank | 7.00 | 7.00 | 6.50 | 6.50 |
| **Public Sector Banks** | | | | |
| Bank of Baroda | 7.25 | 6.75 | 7.25 | 6.50 |
| Bank of India | 7.25 | 6.50 | 6.50 | 6.00 |
| Bank of Maharashtra | 7.00 | 6.50 | 6.25 | 6.00 |
| Canara Bank | 7.25 | 6.85 | 6.80 | 6.70 |
| Central Bank of India | 7.15 | 6.75 | 6.50 | 6.25 |
| Indian Bank | 7.25 | 6.10 | 6.25 | 6.25 |
| Indian Overseas Bank | 7.10 | 6.80 | 6.50 | 6.50 |
| Punjab National Bank | 7.25 | 6.75 | 7.00 | 6.50 |
| Punjab & Sind Bank | 7.40 | 6.20 | 6.00 | 6.00 |
| State Bank of India | 7.10 | 6.80 | 6.50 | 6.50 |
| Union Bank of India | 7.00 | 6.30 | 6.50 | 6.70 |

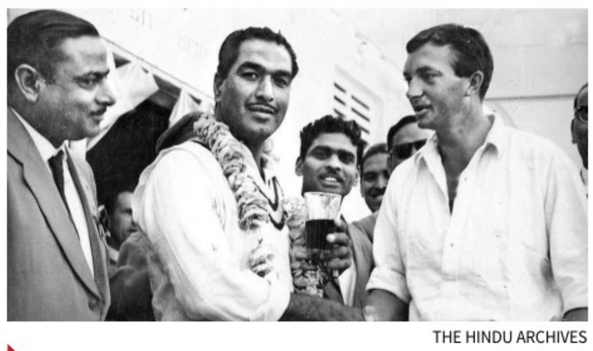
## Home Loan Interest Rates

| Name of Lender | Loan Amount (Rs.) Upto 30 lakh | Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh | Above 75 lakh |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | (In %) |
| **Public Sector Banks** | | | |
| State Bank of India | 8.40-10.15 | 8.40-10.05 | 8.40-10.05 |
| Bank of Baroda | 8.40-10.65 | 8.40-10.65 | 8.40-10.90 |
| Union Bank of India | 8.35-10.75 | 8.35-10.90 | 8.35-10.90 |
| Punjab National Bank | 8.45-10.25 | 8.40-10.15 | 8.40-10.15 |
| Bank of India | 8.30-10.75 | 8.30-10.75 | 8.30-10.75 |
| Canara Bank | 8.50-11.25 | 8.45-11.25 | 8.40-11.15 |
| UCO Bank | 8.45-10.30 | 8.45-10.30 | 8.45-10.30 |
| Bank of Maharashtra | 8.50-11.15 | 8.50-11.15 | 8.50-11.15 |
| Punjab and Sind Bank | 8.50-10.00 | 8.50-10.00 | 8.50-10.00 |
| Indian Overseas Bank | 8.40* | 8.40* | 8.40* |
| Central Bank of India | 8.45-9.80 | 8.45-9.80 | 8.45-9.80 |
| **Private Sector Banks** | | | |
| Kotak Mahindra Bank | 8.70* | 8.70* | 8.70* |
| ICICI Bank | 8.75* | 8.75* | 8.75* |
| Axis Bank | 8.70-13.30 | 8.70-13.30 | 8.70-9.10 |
| HSBC Bank | 8.45* | 8.45* | 8.45* |
| South Indian Bank | 9.57-10.97 | 9.57-10.77 | 9.57-11.42 |
| Karur Vysya Bank | 9.23-10.73 | 9.23-10.73 | 9.23-10.73 |
| Karnataka Bank | 8.75-10.43 | 8.75-10.43 | 8.75-10.43 |
| Federal Bank | 8.80* | 8.80* | 8.80* |
| Dhanlaxmi Bank | 9.35-10.50 | 9.35-10.50 | 9.35-10.50 |
| Tamilnad Mercantile Bank | 9.45-9.95 | 9.45-9.95 | 9.45-9.95 |
| Bandhan Bank | 9.16-15.00 | 9.16-13.33 | 9.16-13.33 |
| RBL Bank | 8.90* | 8.90* | 8.90* |
| CSB Bank | 11.27-13.12 | 11.27-13.12 | 11.27-13.12 |
| HDFC Bank | 8.35* | 8.35* | 8.35* |
| City Union Bank | 12.35 - 14.10 | 12.85 - 14.60 | 13.35 - 14.85 |
| **Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)** | | | |
| LIC Housing Finance | 8.40-10.35 | 8.40-10.55 | 8.40-10.75 |
| Bajaj Housing Finance | 8.50* | 8.50* | 8.50* |
| Tata Capital | 8.70* | 8.70* | 8.70* |
| PNB Housing Finance | 8.50-14.50 | 8.50-14.50 | 8.50-11.45 |
| GIC Housing Finance | 8.80* | 8.80* | 8.80* |
| SMFG India Home Finance | 10.50* | 10.50* | 10.50* |
| Aditya Birla Capital | 8.80-14.75 | 8.80-14.75 | 8.80-14.75 |
| ICICI Home Finance | 9.20* | 9.20* | 9.20* |
| Godrej Housing Finance | 8.55* | 8.55* | 8.55* |

(*Onwards) Rates as on 20th Dec. Source:Paisabazaar.com

SIGNIFICANT DAY

## 64 years after the men, it's the turn of the women to do it for India



THE HINDU ARCHIVES

India women beat Australia by eight wickets to seal their first win against the side in Tests. December 24 also marked the 64th anniversary of the Indian men's team's first win against Australia in the longest format. Captained by G. Ramchand, India defeated the Richie Benaud-led Australia team by 119 runs in Kanpur.

THOROUGH SPORT

## Healy turns photographer, clicks the champions' photograph

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Despite the sparks that flew during the Test match between India and Australia skippers Harmanpreet Kaur and Alyssa Healy, the latter was spotted taking the photographs of the victorious Indian side. "It's not easy to win over here, we found out. The Indians did an amazing job to put pressure on us in particular with the bat," Healy said.

BACK TO BUSINESS

## Kohli rejoins Team India ahead of the first Test against South Africa

PTI

Virat Kohli has rejoined the Indian red-ball squad in South Africa ahead of the Boxing Day Test at the Centurion. Earlier this week, a BCCI source had said that Kohli returned to India due to personal reasons and now is in contention to make his first on-field appearance on December 26 after the World Cup final heartbreak.

EXCITEMENT APLENTY

## Zafardanesh shines as U Mumba outguns Warriors in close contest

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

U Mumba scored a hat-trick of wins, defeating Bengal Warriors 39-37 in a PKL contest in Chennai on Sunday. Amirmohammad Zafardanesh (8 points) shone for U Mumba while Maninder's Super 10 went in vain for Warriors. Bengaluru Bulls edged out Telugu Titans 33-31, with Pawan Sehrawat (13) doing well for the latter.

# India registers historic first Test win over Australia

Pooja provides the early breakthrough on the final day before Sneh and Rajeshwari wrap up the visitors' innings; India cruises to the target and Smriti seals the deal with a boundary

AUSTRALIA IN INDIA

**Shayan Acharya**
MUMBAI

**Perfect execution:** The way Harmanpreet's team managed to mop up the Australian tail on the final day spoke volumes about its resilience. EMMANUAL YOGINI

The one-off Test looked evenly poised until the third day, with Australia hoping to put up a 200-plus target for India. But India walked into the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday morning with a plan and determination.

Over the next three hours and 15 minutes, the home side executed its plans to perfection to pull off an eight-wicket win – its first-ever Test victory against Australia.

Winning two consecutive Test matches in a span of a week is never easy, but India built on its success against England and maintained complete dominance over Australia to make a strong statement. Not once did the lack of experience in playing Test cricket reflect in India's performance, and the way it managed to wrap up the Australian innings on the final day, picking the last five wickets for just 28 runs, spoke volumes about the team's resilience.

Resuming at 233 for five, Australia needed a solid partnership to get going. However, Sneh Rana (four for 63) and Rajeshwari Gayakwad (two for 42) had other plans. After troubling the touring side in the first innings, Pooja Vastrakar provided the early breakthrough by trapping Ashleigh Gardner leg before off a fine yorker in the second over of the day.

India tightened the noose as Rana bowled with aggression after claiming three wickets in the first essay. Having lost a wicket early on, the onus was on the seasoned Annabel Sutherland, but she fell to Rana attempting to play a sweep and offering a catch to Yastika Bhatia behind the stumps.

The umpire, however, didn't rule in India's favour, forcing the Indian camp to refer to the TV umpire just in the nick of time. The decision went India's way and eventually led to Australia's downfall.

Rana added another wicket to her tally off the next ball before Rajeshwari Gayakwad wrapped up the Australian innings with two quick scalps.

India needed 75 runs with more than two sessions remaining. Shafali Verma started off with a boundary before nicking off Kim Garth in the first over. However, Smriti Mandhana remained unbeaten on 38 (61b, 6x4) and forged a crucial 51-run partnership for the second wicket with Richa Ghosh.

The debutant Richa, who scored a fifty in the first innings, earned a reprieve early on as Beth Mooney dropped her first slip off Gardner.

However, she calmed her nerves and built on with Smriti to guide the team closer home.

By the time she was caught by Tahlia McGrath at mid-on, India was 20 runs away from a historic victory. Jemimah Rodrigues hit a couple of fours to hasten India's gallop towards the win before Smriti sealed it with a boundary.

SCOREBOARD

**Australia — 1st innings:** 219 in 77.4 overs.

**India — 1st innings:** 406 in 126.3 overs.

**Australia — 2nd innings:** Beth Mooney run out 33 *(37b, 7x4)*, Phoebe Litchfield b Sneh 18 *(44b, 2x4)*, Ellyse Perry c Yastika b Sneh 45 *(91b, 5x4)*, Tahlia McGrath b Harmanpreet 73 *(177b, 10x4)*, Alyssa Healy lbw b Harmanpreet 32 *(101b, 1x4)*, Annabel Sutherland c Yastika b Sneh 27 *(102b, 3x4)*, Ashleigh Gardner lbw b Pooja 7 *(27b, 1x4)*, Jess Jonassen b Rajeshwari 9 *(42b, 1x4)*, Alana King b Sneh 0 *(1b)*, Kim Garth b Rajeshwari 4 *(8b, 1x4)*, Lauren Cheatle (not out) 0 *(4b)*; Extras (b-10, lb-3): 13; Total (in 105.4 overs): 261.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-49 (Mooney, 11.5 overs), 2-56 (Litchfield, 13.5), 3-140 (Perry, 42.4), 4-206 (McGrath, 71.5), 5-221 (Healy, 79.4), 6-233 (Gardner, 91.4), 7-251 (Sutherland, 100.2), 8-251 (King, 100.3), 9-260 (Garth, 103.3).

**India bowling:** Renuka 11-4-32-0, Pooja 11-1-40-1, Sneh 22-5-63-4, Deepti 22-7-35-0, Rajeshwari 28.4-11-42-2, Jemimah 2-0-13-0, Harmanpreet 9-0-23-2.

**India — 2nd innings:** Shafali Verma c Healy b Garth 4 *(4b, 1x4)*, Smriti Mandhana (not out) 38 *(61b, 6x4)*, Richa Ghosh c McGrath b Gardner 13 *(32b, 3x4)*, Jemimah Rodrigues (not out) 12 *(15b, 2x4)*; Extras (b-8): 8; Total (for two wkts. in 18.4 overs): 75.

**Fall of wickets:** 1-4 (Shafali, 0.4), 2-55 (Richa, 15.2).

**Australia bowling:** Garth 5-1-19-1, Gardner 9-2-18-1, McGrath 2-0-14-0, Jonassen 2.4-0-16-0.

*India won the one-off Test by eight wickets.*

**Player-of-the-Match:** Sneh Rana.

## Harmanpreet's spell the turning point: Sneh

**Shayan Acharya**
MUMBAI

Sneh. EMMANUAL YOGINI

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur had a heated exchange with Australian counterpart Alyssa Healy on Saturday after the latter deflected a throw from the former, who was bowling at that time, resulting in the ball racing to the boundary.

The Indian camp appealed against Healy for obstructing the field, which was rejected by the on-field umpires. Though tempers flew around at that point, things eased out as the game progressed.

In fact, soon after India pulled off an eight-wicket victory on Sunday afternoon, Healy was seen clicking pictures of the home team.

She made it clear that there was no rivalry of sorts with Harmanpreet. "I don't necessarily think there is a rivalry. I think that we're just two cricketers going at it. That's the way that I'd sum it up. She's obviously a passionate cricketer, So am I. And that's what happens when Australia plays India," Healy said, before adding: "It's a good, hard contest and yesterday was just probably an example of that."

### Turning point

Sneh Rana, who claimed seven wickets in the game and was adjudged the Player-of-the-Match, credited Harmanpreet's nine-over spell on the third day as the "turning point".

At a time when the bowlers were toiling, Harmanpreet brought herself into the attack and claimed two key wickets of Tahlia McGrath and Healy. That broke Australia's momentum and brought India back into the game.

### Muzumdar's role

Sneh also mentioned that head coach Amol Muzumdar, who took charge a month-and-a-half ago, has had an important role in the team's success.

"He has been an experienced player and all his inputs have been good. We have tried to follow that and the result can be seen in the last two Tests," she said.

"We are very thankful that he has come on as the coach. We hope to continue doing well under him in the future too."

## Rahul confident of doing well as a Test 'keeper, says Dravid

**Think-tank:** Captain Rohit and coach Dravid see Rahul doing well with the gloves in red-ball cricket. PTI

**Press Trust of India**
CENTURION

K.L. Rahul has always been confident about keeping wickets in Tests and the upcoming series against South Africa will give India's new glove-man an opportunity to do something different, head coach Rahul Dravid said on Sunday.

"I see it as an exciting challenge, an opportunity for him to certainly do something different. Obviously, with Ishan not being available this opportunity came up, we had a couple of keepers to choose from and Rahul is one of them.

"We had discussed with him and he was very confident and was keen on giving it a go," Dravid said during a media interaction.

"We do understand it is not something he has done as often (keeping in Tests). But he has been doing it regularly in 50 overs cricket and that takes a lot out of your body. He has prepared well over the last five to six months, he has done a lot of keeping," Dravid said.

While Dravid explained the rationale behind opting Rahul as wicketkeeper, he also dropped a hint that there won't be much spin bowling on this track.

"This will be a new and exciting challenge for him. I guess one of the things is there's not going to be that much spin bowling, so that will ease him into the role a little bit, something how it goes and pans out," the coach said.

There is a forecast for heavy rains during the first two days and chances of moisture beneath the surface but Dravid was confident that his team has bowling depth to counter adverse conditions.

"We will take a decision but we have balance, if we want, we can play two spinners and three seamers and maybe four seamers. We have that depth and balance (in team) but you can't control weather," he said.

## Anmol emulates Saina; Chirag outlasts Tharun

NATL. BADMINTON

**K. Keerthivasan**
GUWAHATI

**Shuttle of delight:** Anmol and Chirag proved unstoppable. RITU RAJ KONWAR

It has been a productive three months for Chirag Sen of Indian Railways. He has got the better of quite a few higher-ranked players in international tournaments, beginning with the Infosys Challenge in Bengaluru where he reached the semifinals.

And he ended the season on a high, winning the men's singles title in the 85th senior National badminton championships on Sunday with a 21-14, 13-21, 21-9 victory over Telangana's M. Tharun, the fourth seed, in the final.

Haryana's Anmol Kharb was stretched by Tanvi Sharma of Punjab in the women's final before a thigh strain forced the latter to retire with the score reading 15-21, 21-17, 16-8.

Tanvi began well by being aggressive from the backcourt and not giving any width to her opponent to unleash her smashes. She went on to win the opening game 21-15 and also took a 15-10 lead in the second. However, at 17-14, while rushing from the backcourt to retrieve a drop, Tanvi strained her right thigh and had a medical time-out.

She was never the same player again, losing the second game 21-17 and calling it quits while trailing 8-16 in the decider.

"I am happy to win the title at the age of 16. I am even more thrilled as my idol Saina Nehwal was also 16 when she became champion in 2006-07," said Anmol.

The Chirag-Tharun match was expected to be a humdinger and turned out to be one. In the final game, after the players had split the first two, Chirag played like a man possessed, attacking at every opportunity. Once he led 15-9, it was curtains for Tharun.

"I have been struggling in singles for a while. First, I got confidence at the Infosys Challenge held in my Academy (Prakash Padukone) beating some good players. After being in the circuit for four years, I hadn't played in any singles final. I am very happy now," said Chirag.

**The results (finals): Men:** Chirag Sen (Rlys) bt M. Tharun (TS) 21-14, 13-21, 21-9; **Doubles:** K. Pruthvi Roy (Rlys) & Suraj Goala (Asm) bt G. Krishna Prasad (AP) & P. Vishnuvardhan Goud (TS) 20-22, 24-22, 21-14.
**Women:** Anmol Kharb (Har) bt Tanvi Sharma (Pun) 15-21, 21-17, 16-8, retd.; **Doubles:** Priya Devi Konjenbgam (Man) & Sruti Mishra (UP) bt Ritika Thaker & Simran Singhi (Mah) 11-21, 21-14, 21-18.
**Mixed doubles:** Dhruv Kapila (Pun) & Tanisha Crasto (Goa) bt Nitin Kumar & Navdha Manglam (Del) 21-13, 21-8.

## Arsenal holds Liverpool, retains the top spot

**Associated Press**
LIVERPOOL

Liverpool was held by first-placed Arsenal to 1-1 at Anfield in the English Premier League on Saturday.

Arsenal led through Gabriel's fourth-minute header but Mohamed Salah evened the score in the 29th. Salah's 151st Premier League goal moved him to 10th on the all-time list. Liverpool pressed hardest in the second half and hit the woodwork twice. Mikel Arteta's team will go into Christmas at the top of the standings, with Liverpool a point behind in second.

In another match, Wolves continued its stellar home form to heap misery on Chelsea on Christmas eve with a 2-1 win, thanks to second-half strikes from Mario Lemina and Matt Doherty.

### Inter on top

Inter Milan maintained its four-point lead at the top of Serie A with a 2-0 win over Lecce, as Napoli crashed to a 0-2 defeat at Roma which the troubled champions finished with nine men.

**The results: Premier League:** Liverpool 1 (Salah 29) drew with Arsenal 1 (Gabriel 4); Wolves 2 (Lemina 51, Doherty 90+3) bt Chelsea 1 (Nkunku 90+6).

**Serie A:** Inter Milan 2 (Bisseck 43, Barella 78) bt Lecce 0; Verona 2 (Ngonge 53, Djuric 90) bt Cagliari 0; Roma 2 (Pellegrini 76, Lukaku 90+6) bt Napoli 0.

## INBRIEF

### Double delight for Muddappa in National drag racing

Bengaluru businessman Hemanth Muddappa (Mantra Racing) confirmed his status as the 'king of superbikes' by winning two titles – Unrestricted and 1051-1650cc Super Sport - in the MMSC FMSCI Indian National Motorcycle Drag Racing Championship 2023 which concluded in Chennai on Sunday. Muddappa clinched the crowns in both Unrestricted and 1051-1650cc (Super Sport) categories, winning all four rounds, while Hyderabad's Mohammed Riyaz annexed the championship in the 551-850cc (Super Sport) class, also with an unbeaten record.

### Odisha Juggernauts begins campaign in style

Defending champion Odisha Juggernauts began the Ultimate Kho Kho Season 2 campaign with a 35-27 win over Rajasthan Warriors in Cuttack on Sunday. Akshay Masal scored eight points, while Rohan Shingade, Avinash Desai, and Gowtham M.K. stayed on the mat for more than four minutes to take their team to victory.

**LIVE TELECAST**

**Ultimate Kho Kho**: Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 7 p.m. onwards
**PKL**: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m. onwards
**Australia vs Pakistan**: 2nd Test, day 1, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 5 a.m. (Tuesday)

# Sivasakthi's header saves BFC's blushes

The 1-1 draw means status quo remains in the points table, with NEUFC lying eighth and BFC ninth, both on 11 points

**ISL-10**

**N. Sudarshan**
BENGALURU

There was no festive cheer, neither was there any despair as Bengaluru FC and NorthEast United FC played out an entertaining 1-1 draw in the Indian Super League at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Sunday.

When NorthEast's Nestor Albiach converted an 86th-minute spot-kick after a foul from Naorem Roshan, Christmas had seemingly come early for the visitors. But substitute N. Sivasakthi gate-crashed the party with a fine header in the 95th minute off a cross from Jessel Carneiro. Status quo was thus maintained in the points table, with NorthEast remaining eighth (11 points) and BFC ninth (also 11 pts, but inferior goal difference).

The first period set the tone for a lively evening as both sides threatened the goal multiple times. The deadlock was unbroken largely because neither outfit could summon the killer instinct in the final third.

The first clear-cut chance fell to the away side in the 55th minute when M.S. Jithin cut in from the left and unleashed a fierce shot from just outside the penalty area only to be thwarted by a diving Gurpreet Singh Sandhu. Immediately after, BFC's Ryan Williams broke free during a counter-attack but couldn't beat the NorthEast custodian Mirshad Koottappunna.

**At the 11th hour:** Sivasakthi found the net in stoppage time.
K. MURALI KUMAR

Following the hour mark, NorthEast's Albiach and Parthib Gogoi missed headers from close range while Halicharan Narzary was denied by a lunging last-ditch tackle from Huidrom Thoi Singh.

With 10 minutes left, Gogoi missed a golden opportunity when he fluffed a one-on-one with Gurpreet. Spaniard Albiach's penalty would have helped him breathe a little, but it wasn't long before Sivasakthi knocked the air out of NorthEast.

**The results:**

**At Bengaluru:** Bengaluru FC 1 (Sivasakthi 90+5) drew with NorthEast United FC 1 (Albiach 86-pen).

**At Kochi:** Kerala Blasters 2 (Diamantakos 11, Peprah 45+5) bt Mumbai City FC 0.

# Jaismine, Arundhati ease into the quarterfinals

**BOXING**

**Press Trust of India**
GREATER NOIDA

Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Jaismine (60kg) and former youth world champion Arundhati Choudhary (66kg) notched up identical 5-0 wins to progress to the quarterfinals of the Women's National Boxing Championships here on Sunday.

Representing SSCB, Jaismine showcased her experience in securing a commanding victory over Thongam Kunjarani Devi of Manipur in the round-of-16 bout to set up a clash with Poonam Kaithwas of Maharashtra in the quarterfinals.

Arundhati, on the other hand, beat Amita of All India Police. The boxer will now be up against Komalpreet Kaur of Punjab in the quarterfinals.

In other significant bouts, Sakshi (57kg) of SSCB beat Jyoti of Delhi in the round-of-32 match. The match was closely contested until Sakshi unleashed a flurry of punches, ultimately winning the bout as the referee stopped the contest in the third round. She will face off against Refa Mohid of Telangana in the next round.

Haryana's Saweety Boora (81kg) beat Kanishka of UP as she defeated her opponent after the referee stopped the contest in round 3. She will face Saie Davkhar of Maharashtra in the quarterfinals.

# Divya sparkles in the air pistol final; Karan finishes on top

**SHOOTING**

**Sports Bureau**
NEW DELHI

T.S. Divya made sparkling strides in the final to finish on top in women's air pistol as the National shooting selection trials concluded at the Dr. Karni Singh Range, Tughlakabad, on Sunday.

The 28-year-old Divya qualified in eighth place, overtaking Olympian Yashaswini Singh Deswal and Yuvika Tomar on the count back after being tied on 574. She topped with 243.8, beating Manu Bhaker by 1.6 point.

Qualification topper Rhythm Sangwan (578) was placed fifth behind Anuradha Devi and Sainyam.

**On the podium:** Manu, topper Divya and Anuradha in women's air pistol final on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The other finalists were Jasmin Kaur, Padma Devaram and Olympian Annu Raj Singh. Hangzhou Asian Games gold medalist, 18-year-old Palak Gulia, missed the final by one point and was 14th with 573.

In men's air pistol, Karan Sehrawat beat Shiva Narwal by 0.4 point for the top spot. Qualification topper and winner of the first trial, Olympian Saurabh Chaudhary (586), was fourth behind Kedarling Uchaganve. Yogesh Kumar, Amit Sharma, Aditya Malra and Olympian Gurpreet Singh were the others to make the final.

**The results:**

**10m air pistol: Men:** 1. Karan Sehrawat 243.0 (584); 2. Shiva Narwal 242.6 (583); 3. Kedarling Uchaganve 222.4 (585).

**Women:** 1. T.S. Divya 243.8 (574); 2. Manu Bhaker 242.4 (576); 3. Anuradha Devi 219.5 (577).

# 'Prioritising international cricket has helped me'

**Press Trust of India**
SYDNEY

Australia's Mitchell Starc admitted that he had turned down multiple lucrative offers from the Indian Premier League (IPL) in the past to prioritise his international career, which "helped" him improve his game.

Starc has been roped in by two-time winner Kolkata Knight Riders for a record ₹24.75 crore during the auction last week, and it would be his first stint in the tournament since 2015.

He said the break during the IPL allowed him to recharge himself and stay fit for international assignments.

"Juggling one cricket schedule is hard enough, let alone when there's two in a relationship.

"So, I've always spent that time away from cricket with Alyssa or time with family and recharging my body for being as fit and as ready as I can for Australian cricket," he was quoted by *AAP*.

"I don't regret any of it. I think it's certainly helped my Test cricket. The money is always nice and certainly was this year, but I've always prioritised international cricket, and I think that's helped my game."

Starc. AFP

# Khawaja denied permission to have peace symbol

**Agence France-Presse**
MELBOURNE

Australia's Usman Khawaja has been denied permission to place a peace symbol on his bat and shoes for the Boxing Day Test against Pakistan, reports said on Sunday.

A sticker showing a black dove and the words 01:UDHR –a reference to Article One of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights –was on his bat and shoes during training in Melbourne on Sunday.

The star batter had multiple meetings with Cricket Australia over recent days to find a message that would be appropriate for the second Test this week, local media said.

The 36-year-old had wanted to show his support for the people of Gaza.

But his latest humanitarian gesture has been turned down by the International Cricket Committee, The Australian and Melbourne Age newspapers reported.

Khawaja. AFP

He wore a black armband during the match and was reprimanded by the ICC, but insisted afterwards it was for a "personal bereavement" and vowed to contest the ruling.

# Mireya fancied for Wanaparthy Cup

HYDERABAD: The five-year-old mare Mireya, who won well in her last start, should repeat her performance in the Wanaparthy Cup, the chief event of Monday's (Dec. 25) races.

**1. KUNTALA PLATE** (1,400m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) – 1.30 p.m.: 1. D Yes Boss (6) Ashad Asbar 60.5, 2. Master Touch (1) A. Imran Khan 60.5, 3. Miracle Mary (8) Abhay Singh 58, 4. Bold Beauty (2) N.B. Kuldeep 53.5, 5. Sucker Punch (5) G. Naresh 53, 6. Golden Inzio (4) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 51.5, 7. Spectacular Cruise (7) Afroz Khan 50.5 and 8. Samrat (3) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 50.

**1. BOLD BEAUTY, 2. MIRACLE MARY, 3. MASTER TOUCH**

**2. ARISTOCRAT PLATE** (Div. I) (1,100m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) – 2.00: 1. Crimson Rose (7) A. Imran Khan 61, 2. Sangreal (4) Santosh Raj 59.5, 3. Pontefract (2) Mukesh Kumar 58, 4. Silver Act (5) Ajay Kumar 58, 5. Ok Boss (1) N.B. Kuldeep 57, 6. Dali's Champion (3) Kuldeep Sngh (Sr) 55, 7. Blue Label (6) R.S. Jodha 52.5 and 8. Muaser (8) P. Ajeeth Kumar 51.5.

**1. CRIMSON ROSE, 2. SILVER ACT, 3. PONTEFRACT**

**3. TRADE FAIR PLATE** (1,200m), rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II) – 2.30: 1. Bangor On Dee (4) Md. Ekram Alam 60, 2. Tripurari (5) P. Ajeeth Kumar 58.5, 3. Maverick (6) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 55.5, 4. Splendour On Grass (8) Santosh Raj 55.5, 5. The Thunder (1) Ashad Asbar 52, 6. Power Ranger (2) Nakhat Singh 51, 7. Cabello (3) Ajay Kumar 50.5 and 8. N R I Ultrapower (7) Abhay Singh 50.5.

**1. BANGOR ON DEE, 2. SPLENDOUR ON GRASS, 3. TRIPURARI**

**4. ARISTOCRAT PLATE** (Div. II) (1,100m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) – 3.00: 1. D Right Time (7) Ashad Asbar 61, 2. Subha (6) Afroz Khan 59, 3. Shadow Fax (5) Ajay Kumar 58.5, 4. Calista Girl (1) Shivansh 57.5, 5. Star Cruise (3) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 57, 6. Cosmico (8) Md. Ismail 54, 7. Lights On (4) Nakhat Singh 52.5 and 8. Battle On (2) Santosh Raj 52.

**1. SHADOW FAX, 2. CALISTA GIRL, 3. D RIGHT TIME**

**5. HUSSAIN SAGAR CUP** (2,000m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) – 3.30: 1. Aerial Combat (7) Md. Ekram Alam 60, 2. Hero Of The East (2) A. Imran Khan 60, 3. Voice Of A Dream (3) P. Ajeeth Kumar 57, 4. Das (1) Deepak Singh 56.5, 5. Forever Bond (6) Surya Prakash 54.5, 6. Alpine Girl (4) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 53.5 and 7. Caraxes (5) Afroz Khan 53.5.

**1. HERO OF THE EAST, 2. VOICE OF A DREAM, 3. FOREVER BOND**

**6. WANAPARTHY CUP** (1,400m), 5-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II) – 4.00: 1. Mark My Day (6) Nakhat Singh 60, 2. Wallop And Gallop (10) P. Ajeeth Kumar 58, 3. Its On (2) Mukesh Kumar 57, 4. Sun Dancer (13) Afroz Khan 57, 5. Delhi Heights (1) G. Naresh 56.5, 6. Doe A Deer (11) Shivansh 55, 7. Mireya (9) Ajay Kumar 55, 8. Pinatubo (3) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 54.5, 9. Beldona (5) Abhay Singh 53.5, 10. Fly Tothe Stars (8) Md. Ismail 53, 11. Top In Class (12) Mohit Singh 53, 12. First Class (7) Surya Prakash 51 and 13. Star Racer (4) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 51.

**1. MIREYA, 2. DOE A DEER, 3. MARK MY DAY**

**7. ARISTOCRAT PLATE** (Div. III) (1,100m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III) – 4.30: 1. Hard To Toss (2) A. Imran Khan 61, 2. Ambitious Star (7) Md. Ekram Alam 58.5, 3. Saint Emilion (4) Shivansh 58, 4. Golden Forza (1) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 57.5, 5. Precious Gift (6) Ajay Kumar 56, 6. Exponent (8) R.S. Jodha 53.5, 7. Urgent (3) Santosh Raj 51.5 and 8. Pair Of Wings (5) Surya Prakash 50.

**1. GOLDEN FORZA, 2. SAINT EMILION, 3. HARD TO TOSS**

Day's Best: Mireya.
Jackpot: 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7.
Mini jackpot: (i) 1, 2, 3 & 4; (ii) 4, 5, 6 & 7.
Treble: (i) 2, 3 & 4; (ii) 5, 6 & 7.
Tanala: All races.